

Defining ESL Instruction

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# 2 Defining ESL Instruction

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## 2.1 English Language Development in Massachusetts

English language development takes place in all classrooms with ELs.

ESE uses the term *English language development* (ELD) to describe all of the language development that takes place throughout the student’s day, in both sheltered content classrooms and ESL classrooms.

**ELD in content**: English language development happens in an integrated way in all content classrooms with at least one EL as SEI-endorsed, content-licensed educators shelter instruction and help ELs develop discipline-specific academic language. ELD happens in SEI classrooms as ELs learn grade-level content along with their proficient English-speaking peers.

**ELD in ESL**: English language development also happens in ESL classes, when ELs are grouped together and licensed ESL teachers guide students in a systematic, dedicated, and sustained study time to develop various aspects of the English language that proficient English speakers already know.

## 2.2 Definition of the Focus of ESL Instruction in Massachusetts

The goal of English as a second language (ESL)instruction in Massachusetts public schools is to advance English Learners’ (ELs) language development and promote their academic achievement. English language proficiency includes *social**and academic* language in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (WIDA, 2012a). ESL instruction provides systematic, explicit, and sustained language instruction, and prepares students for general education by focusing on academic language[[1]](#footnote-1) while also attending to social instructional language. Effective ESL instruction supports student success in school, including improvement of ACCESS scores and acceleration of academic achievement. It also supports long-term goals such as college and career readiness. ESL instruction, with its own dedicated time and curriculum, is a required component of any program serving ELs in Massachusetts (Sheltered English Instruction, Two-Way Immersion, Transitional Bilingual Education).

The ESL curriculum is aligned to WIDA’s [English Language Development Standards](https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/standards/eld) and to the [Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html).

ESL is its own subject matter. The subject matter knowledge required of licensed ESL educators is outlined in [603 CMR 7.00](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr7.html).

ESL instruction is based on the research, theory, and pedagogy of second language acquisition within the context of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

ESL is language driven, but draws from general education content as the vehicle for language development within a sociocultural context. Language functions and forms targeted during ESL instruction are taught within rich, contextualized, and meaningful circumstances (WestEd, 2015).

Although ESL educators must be knowledgeable about the academic language across disciplines, they are not expected to be multi-disciplinarians (Valdés, Kibler, & Walqui, 2014b). They cannot be expected to be experts in all content area standards and the full range of corresponding content-specific academic language practices, just as SEI educators are not expected to teach the full range of English language development subject matter. Therefore, the ESL educator should focus on the academic language, common academic habits of thinking (i.e., use evidence to support claims, question evidence, etc.) and analytical practices, and standards that support students across all content areas.

The language development of EL students is the responsibility of both ESL and other academic teachers. ESL teachers, in collaboration with other content teachers, should continue to develop awareness of the language ELs need to be able to process and produce English in order to reach high levels of performance in all academic classes. Likewise, all academic teachers need to develop awareness and strategies to support the disciplinary language needs of EL students.

Gaining proficiency in the academic language of American schools requires more than linguistic knowledge. Teachers of ELs must also consider cultural knowledge and ways of being, interacting, negotiating, speaking, listening, reading, and writing as connected to cultural and social roles.

Considerations must be made for **special populations** (e.g., newcomers, [students with limited or interrupted formal education](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/guidance/default.html), students with disabilities, long-term ELs, gifted and talented ELs, etc.).[[2]](#footnote-2) **Note for newcomers**: “for students at the earliest levels of English language proficiency, curricula must clearly be different. They should…move students as quickly as possible forward and toward the analytical tasks that are inside of our standards and outlined in the frameworks…” (Valdés, Kibler, & Walqui, 2014a, p. 16). Furthermore, for students who are just beginning to learn a language, everyday language becomes the basis for academic language. However, while attending to everyday language, educators must simultaneously guide students toward the skills, knowledge, and analytical practices embedded in the Frameworks. Regardless of students’ proficiency levels or educational needs, language forms and functions should still be taught in a contextualized, rich, and meaningful manner.

ESL instruction incorporates multiple forms of assessment to gather evidence of students’ progress toward standards that focus on speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Any other content (science, math, social studies, etc.) that becomes part of a language assessment is incidental—a context for language instruction and development. ESL assessments are not meant to assess students’ content area-specific knowledge or skills. For example, an educator who holds an ESL license can design assessments that measure the academic *language* of the content areas, but should not assess the *content* of science, math, English language arts, or other areas that require additional, related teaching licenses.

## 2.3 Scenarios Showcasing ESL Instruction

In order to be successful 21st century citizens, ELs must become proficient in English and learn content simultaneously. According to the new *Definition of the Focus of ESL Instruction* (included in this guide as Section [2.2](#FocusESLinMA)), the goal of ESL instruction is to help students meet this dual challenge by providing systematic, explicit, and sustained language instruction to develop the high level of English language proficiency needed for academic achievement. Effective ESL instruction works in conjunction with SCI in SEI programs, and alongside content area instruction in students’ first language in bilingual programs (e.g., TWI, TBE). ESL instruction focuses on academic language and developing students’ ability to listen, speak, read, and write in English across a variety of social and academic contexts (Gottlieb, 2013; Pottinger, 1970) to promote language development and support ELs’ content area learning in grade-level academic classrooms. It also supports students’ success in school, including improvement of ACCESS scores and acceleration of academic achievement, as well as long-term goals such as college and career readiness.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The following sections discuss some important considerations related to effectively implementing this type of ESL instruction, including ESL curricula, student grouping, instructional arrangements, and essential supporting structures. They also provide examples of effective ESL instruction in a variety of instructional settings and address common misconceptions about ESL.

### 2.3.1 Curriculum Considerations

As used in this guidance, the term *curriculum* includes key instructional processes such as determining learners’ needs in relationship to standards, establishing learning outcomes to address students’ needs, designing and implementing learning experiences to help students achieve these outcomes, and evaluating learning experiences and student learning resulting from these processes (Richards, 2001). As its own subject matter, ESL instruction should follow a dedicated, language-focused curriculum that is aligned to the WIDA English Language Development Standards and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, and is based on the research, theory, and pedagogy of second language acquisition[[4]](#footnote-4)within the context of the Frameworks. Although ESL instruction is focused on language, academic content and disciplinary practices are used as a vehicle for language development within a sociocultural context.[[5]](#footnote-5) This means that the ESL curriculum integrates language development standards with content area standards.[[6]](#footnote-6) It also means that English discourse features, language functions, forms, and vocabulary are taught within contextualized and meaningful circumstances that integrate grade-level academic standards.[[7]](#footnote-7) Most importantly, in order to effectively support students’ academic achievement, the ESL curriculum should be developed and implemented through skilled collaboration between ESL and other academic teachers. Such partnerships between language and content teachers are extremely important for planning, assessing, and coordinating effective curriculum for ELs.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Because of differences in local student population and language program approaches and models, the ESL curriculum may vary from district to district. For example, the ESL curriculum used alongside TWI or within TBE may differ from the one used in SEI programs. What matters most is that it be designed to meet the needs of ELs, and that districts ensure that staffing and other resources are effectively allocated to support its implementation. In the Massachusetts context, this means developing a dedicated curriculum for ESL as its own subject: a curriculum focused on language, connected and aligned to both language and grade-level content area standards, and clearly documented as such. Therefore, regardless of the particular language program model, teachers and administrators must be able to articulate how their districts’ ESL curricula meet essential criteria defined by the state of Massachusetts and provide evidence showcasing how ESL lessons and assessments are derived from it.

**ESL Student Groupings**

ELs should receive language instruction and support consistent with their language needs.[[9]](#footnote-9) This allows for flexible grouping arrangements for ESL instruction, within several key parameters:

* ELs should be grouped by language proficiency levels during ESL instruction to ensure that teachers offer instructional supports that maximize language development. This type of grouping allows for different amounts of ESL instruction based on students’ needs. For example, *Foundational* students (those at WIDA ELP levels 1–3) should receive proportionally more ESL instruction than those at higher performance levels (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 2015).[[10]](#footnote-10)
* Regardless of their language proficiency levels, ELs must be grouped in ways that provide them access to intellectually challenging, age- and grade-appropriate curricula.[[11]](#footnote-11) For example, at a school with level 1 ELs in kindergarten, first, and fourth grade, kindergarteners and first graders may be grouped together for ESL instruction. However, fourth graders should be grouped separately because of intellectual and developmental differences between them and younger students.
* ELs may be grouped by age or grade level if it is possible to do so and still keep students of similar language proficiency levels together (e.g., level 1–2 fifth graders in one group, and level 4–5 fifth graders in another group).

ESL instruction grouping arrangements are not meant to segregate ELs. Instead, careful grouping of students allows ESL teachers to apply their deep expertise in second language development within academic contexts to target instruction to ELs’ diverse needs. Outside of ESL instruction, ELs should be given opportunities to interact with proficient English-speaking peers as much as possible to ensure that they have authentic opportunities to negotiate meaning and acquire a second language. ELs also benefit from opportunities to develop and use their native language to support both language and content area learning.

Ultimately, grouping decisions for ESL instruction must be made based on the instructional goals and programmatic needs of the students, not on schedules or logistical convenience. Successful programs for ELs engage in systematic team decision-making processes each year, and incorporate classroom and assessment data analysis as well as the expertise of ESL teachers and EL program administrators. They also ensure that all educators serving ELs across the program regularly communicate, plan, and coordinate services.

**ESL Instructional Arrangements**

ESL instruction may be delivered through a variety of settings (e.g., push-in, pull-out, self-contained) and programs, as long as the primary instructional focus remains on developing ELs’ English language, and how to use its features and forms effectively in a variety of academic and social contexts. Content area standards and disciplinary ways of using language must be integrated into ESL instruction to ensure that ELs can successfully transfer their language knowledge and skills to content area learning.[[12]](#footnote-12) Still, ESL instruction focuses on language study, not direct instruction of content. In Massachusetts, instruction focused on mastering content area knowledge and skills is the responsibility of content area teachers certified in the appropriate discipline, provided during SCI, TWI, or TBE programs (ESE, 2015c).

Notwithstanding the specific instructional setting or student grouping, administrators must carefully consider how to structure ESL to ensure that ELs are receiving quality language instruction without restricting meaningful access to rigorous grade-level academic curricula.[[13]](#footnote-13) As much as possible, ELs should not be removed from core content instruction (such as math or social studies) to receive ESL instruction. Generally speaking, ELs should not be denied access to grade-level curricula as they develop English language proficiency, so programs serving ELs (e.g., SEI, TWI, TBE) must provide both content area and ESL instruction. ELs need instructional time devoted to developing a solid foundation in the English language as well as opportunities to learn language throughout the day in appropriately supported math, science, social studies, and language arts classes in order to succeed academically (Saunders, Goldenberg, & Marceletti, 2013). This necessary focus on language is generally not possible during content area instruction, so a dedicated time focused on language instruction can support both language development and content learning for ELs (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2012; Dutro & Moran, 2003).

Because of the specific needs of some ELs, such as students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), on occasion “districts may use a curriculum that temporarily emphasizes English language acquisition over other subjects” (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 2015, p. 19).

In such cases, where ELs miss core curriculum classes or opportunities to participate in the full range of curricular and extracurricular activities because of ESL instruction, “districts must provide compensatory and supplemental services to remedy academic deficits that the student may have developed while focusing on English language acquisition…within a reasonable length of time” (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 2015, p. 19).

In other words, any temporary delay in delivery of grade-level content is the *exception*, part of an alternate programming for ELs that emphasizes language instruction but also addresses resulting gaps in core content instruction in a way that ensures students can meaningfully participate in grade-level core content instruction as soon as possible.

Different ESL instructional arrangements for ELs at the elementary and secondary levels are presented below in sample scenarios of ESL instruction. Districts have flexibility in how they structure local language program components, such as ESL, within state and federal guidance. Therefore, these scenarios are not meant to provide comprehensive examples of what ESL instruction will look like in every school or district, detailed descriptions of how teachers implement full ESL lessons or units within a given context, or a list of all significant factors to consider when structuring ESL. Their main purpose is to highlight important components of effective ESL instruction as defined in this guidance, and snapshots of what they may look like as applied in sample instructional arrangements.

**Newcomer Programs**

Newcomer programs are temporary, transitional programs for recently arrived immigrant ELs at the earliest levels of English language proficiency, often referred to as newcomers (Friedlander, 1991). They are designed to meet the unique needs of this population; among their goals are helping students develop basic English language skills, providing instruction in core content areas in preparation for participation in general education classrooms, developing multicultural understanding and intercultural communication, and guiding students through the acculturation process in American schools (Friedlander, 1991; Short & Boyson, 2012).

Because newcomers are just beginning to learn the English language, they clearly need different curricula. However, ESL curricula for newcomers must remain “based upon and move students as quickly as possible toward the analytical tasks implicit in content area standards” and be “implemented in a manner that provides the necessary content to address linguistic needs and facilitate their participation in inclusive, standards-based classrooms as soon as possible” (Valdés, Kibler, & Walqui, 2014a, p. 16). Therefore, newcomer programs should provide both ESL instruction that is based on a dedicated, language-focused curriculum and grade-level content area instruction based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks delivered through SCI in SEI programs, or first language instruction in TWI or TBE programs. Newcomers should have access to both ESL instruction and content area instruction, as well as opportunities to participate in the full range of curricular and extracurricular activities available to all other students. This may be difficult to coordinate in these types of programs, where a temporary intense focus on language may be needed to help students acclimate to schooling in the United States. Nevertheless, as federal guidance dictates, “if districts choose to temporarily emphasize English language acquisition, they retain the obligation to…provide assistance necessary to remedy content area deficits that were incurred during the time when the EL student was more focused on learning English” (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 2015, p. 19).

Districts operating newcomer programs should be careful to avoid unnecessary segregation of students. For example, ELs should be integrated with proficient speakers of English during nonacademic subjects, lunch, and recess, and be encouraged to participate in integrated extracurricular activities (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 2015, p. 23).

ELs should also be given opportunities to transition out of newcomer programs regularly throughout the school year based on their language development and academic progress.

The scenario below illustrates a sample newcomer program at the secondary level.

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| Scenario 1: High School Newcomer Program  *(Curriculum Framework and Evaluation Criteria Committee, 2015, chapter 7, snapshot 7.5)*  Harrison High School’s Newcomer Program for recently arrived immigrant adolescents provides a robust academic curriculum for *Foundational* ELs (WIDA levels 1–2). The program includes a year-long intensive program during students’ first year in the United States, but students can exit between grading quarters or stay longer based on their individual needs. They are assessed in their primary language and in English when they arrive in order to determine how teachers will differentiate instruction;[[14]](#footnote-14) class sizes are kept small, with a cap at 20 students. The intensive first-year program is taught by a team of teachers dually licensed in ESL and another core content area subject. These teachers also teach SCI courses at Harrison, and the newcomer ELs will eventually transition to courses taught by these teachers. This supports their transition and academic progress well beyond their time in the Newcomer Program. The students’ daily schedule includes a double period of ESL, and one period each of math, science, social studies, ELA, and rotating specials (art, music, electives, etc.)—each a credit-bearing course. The program uses curricula aligned to both the WIDA Standards and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The ESL class follows a dedicated ESL curriculum that builds on the academic language and standards of the other subjects. The content area curriculum follows the same learning goals as those established for mainstream English proficient students, but teachers scaffold and shelter their instruction in English and attend to their ELs’ linguistic and sociocultural needs.[[15]](#footnote-15)  They also incorporate project-based learning into their lessons and emphasize collaboration and meaningful communication throughout. When students are ready to transition out of the program, they continue receiving ESL instruction appropriate for their language proficiency level as well as sheltered content area instruction in mainstream classrooms. They transition into general education classrooms together, placed in sheltered content classes in clusters with English proficient peers and other ELs. Each student has a transition profile, and the school follows a systematic monitoring plan to ensure that they continue to progress. Beyond academics, the Newcomer Program teachers co-sponsor an extracurricular club that includes English-proficient students and other ELs. The school’s network of support includes guidance counselors and a family liaison. Guidance counselors receive specialized training and serve as mentors who support students’ adjustment to school life, class scheduling, and college and career planning.  The school’s family liaison supports both students and their families by serving as translators/interpreters (or bringing trained interpreters when needed), and by connecting parents to services in the community, such as refugee assistance centers, cultural community organizations, and health providers. |

Pull-Out and Self-Contained ESL

In this guidance, “self-contained” refers to ESL instruction that is built within a school’s regular or master schedule like any other class. In this case, the school applies principles of universal design to scheduling to serve the needs of all of its students. Self-contained ESL, then, is not taking the place of another class, but is simply part of a student’s schedule. On the other hand, “pull-out” describes situations in which an ESL teacher removes students from another class to deliver ESL instruction. In pull-out ESL, ELs are pulled out from general classrooms at regularly scheduled times for ESL instruction. Then they return to their regular classrooms and follow a regular schedule for content instruction the rest of the school day.

Self-contained and pull-out ESL should be based on ESL curricula aligned to both the WIDA Standards and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.[[16]](#footnote-16) ESL teachers still collaborate with content area teachers to integrate content area topics and disciplinary literacy into language instruction.[[17]](#footnote-17) Such collaboration ensures that language learning occurs within meaningful circumstances and allows both content area and ESL teachers to share responsibility for ELs’ language development by providing opportunities to monitor progress and plan instruction tailored to students’ needs.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Self-contained and pull-out ESL require careful attention when designing students’ schedules to guarantee that ELs have access to grade-level core academic instruction delivered by a highly qualified teacher who is licensed in the appropriate content area and holds an [SEI Endorsement](http://www.doe.mass.edu/retell/). ESL instruction, as referenced in this guidance, integrates content standards as contexts of meaningful language learning, but is primarily focused on developing students’ language and literacy skills. This is in contrast to SCI, whose main goal is to develop students’ mastery of disciplinary knowledge and skills. ELs need both types of instruction in order to engage meaningfully with content area curriculum and succeed academically (Council of the Great City Schools, 2014). Removing ELs from content area classes for ESL instruction means they may miss essential learning opportunities in core academic areas, which are a key part of ensuring ELs’ success in general education classrooms “within a reasonable length of time” (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 2015). As well as their access to the full range of grade-level curricula, it can interfere with their legal rights to equitable educational opportunities. Therefore, districts must judiciously consider scheduling of ESL and content instruction so that ELs have access to both.

The following example illustrates what self-contained ESL may look like at the elementary level.

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| **Scenario 2: Pull-Out, Elementary School**  Ms. Granger is an elementary ESL teacher who pulls out small groups of ELs every day. She groups her ELs by language proficiency across grade spans in order to tailor instruction to students’ language levels.[[19]](#footnote-19) For example, she clusters fourth- and fifth-grade *Transitional* students (WIDA levels 4–5 and some high level 3 students) into one group, and has a different group for her *Foundational* (WIDA levels 1–2, and some early level 3 students) third and fourth graders. Most importantly, Ms. Granger keeps her groups flexible, based on her students’ needs. Her lessons are based on a dedicated, language-focused curriculum aligned to the WIDA Standards and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. This ESL curriculum was developed in collaboration with general education teachers and other district ESL teachers. For example, during one of the annual professional development days, Ms. Granger and content area teachers used district curriculum maps to identify content topics that could be used as contexts for language instruction. Then Ms. Granger selected a few of these topics as contexts for her ESL units. For instance, many of the students will be studying fractions in the second semester, so one of the ESL units uses the topic of fractions as a context for developing the key academic language use of Explain. Ms. Granger and the math teacher used the Collaboration Tool (see Section 3.2) to choose and discuss specific aspects of the language of math for the dedicated ESL unit. In this unit, Ms. Granger helps students develop the English language needed to state claims and evaluate others’ claims using the language of math and fractions (e.g., “I think these are equivalent fractions because…”; “I agree with…because…but not with…”) to practice academic language (conjunctions, compound and complex sentences) in an authentic context. Collaboration continues throughout the school year during PLC sessions, when Ms. Granger meets with her students’ homeroom teachers to discuss upcoming lessons and strategic ways of connecting the ESL and content area curriculum.[[20]](#footnote-20) Although she cannot meet with each teacher every month, she meets with a teacher from a different grade level at least once per quarter. When they meet, Ms. Granger often helps general education teachers choose and implement a variety of supports to scaffold language learning, such as first language supports (e.g., cognates, resources in different languages, bilingual dictionaries)[[21]](#footnote-21) and identifying embedded language functions (e.g., comparing, contrasting, describing) and related academic language embedded in common tasks. For example, last week she helped Mr. Smith, the fifth-grade teacher, use the Collaboration Tool to identify key phrases and sentence structures for comparing and contrasting (e.g., *similar to/different from,* complex sentences with *because*) and ways to make this language more explicit to support ELs during a science activity where students were asked to describe similarities and differences of forests before and after deforestation (WIDA, 2012c).  *Ms. Granger’s classroom is a good example of pull-out ESL at the elementary level. She focuses her instruction on teaching how the English language works, helping her students learn and practice academic language within meaningful contexts—as in the unit connecting to the language of math showcased in the scenario. She follows a dedicated language development curriculum, developed through collaboration between ESL and general education teachers, that integrates content topics with which she feels comfortable.*  *Because she is primarily responsible for language development, Ms. Granger focuses on providing ample practice with specific language functions and features (explaining, stating, and evaluating a claim) rather than on content mastery (being able to create equivalent fractions). She also regularly collaborates with content area teachers to maximize student learning in both ESL and general education classrooms.* |

At the secondary level, self-contained ESL instruction is intentionally scheduled within the master schedule as a specific, credit-bearing course for ELs. These courses are taught by certified ESL teachers in their own classrooms and are scheduled as part of an ELs’ regular schedule.

In order to be considered ESL as described in this guidance, these courses must follow a dedicated ESL curriculum, focused on students’ academic, social, and instructional language needs, and connect to grade-level appropriate content area topics and standards.

Consider the following examples of self-contained ESL instruction at the secondary level.

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| **Scenario 3: Self-Contained ESL, Middle School**  Ms. Wagner is an itinerant ESL teacher. She teaches at two middle schools in her district. At the beginning of each school year she works with administrators and teachers at her schools to consider specific students she will teach and group them into their ESL classes strategically by grade and language proficiency level as much as possible.[[22]](#footnote-22) This year, at one of her middle schools, she has three groups she meets with before lunch. During first period she meets with a group of sixth- and seventh-grade newcomer ELs (WIDA level 1), followed by another group of seventh- and eighth-grade ELs at the *Foundational* level (WIDA levels 2–low 3), and a third group of *Transitional* (WIDA levels 4–5) seventh- and eighth-grade students during third period. The rest of the school day her students participate in SCI from their own grade levels, learning content-area-specific academic language and disciplinary literacy practices. Ms. Wagner follows an ESL curriculum aligned to the WIDA Standards and the Frameworks. Its units draw their topics from content area standards and the district’s middle school curriculum. When developing this curriculum, Ms. Wagner collaborated with content area teachers from the middle schools she serves, who teach ELs and are interested in learning more about how to better support these students during content area instruction. The ESL curriculum took years to develop, and varies from year to year based on her students’ needs (e.g., language proficiency levels, grade levels, scheduling). For example, one of the units in the ESL curriculum she is following with her newcomers focuses on “Explain” and “Discuss,” two [Key Uses of Academic Language](https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/Can-Do-Descriptors-Key-Uses-K-12-FAQs.pdf). This unit connects to the district’s sixth-grade math curriculum, which includes an introduction to statistics and data analysis.[[23]](#footnote-23) The ESL unit gives students opportunities to develop the language needed to describe and summarize data gathered through simple surveys about food preferences among family members, the language needed to construct questions to develop survey questions, the language needed to draft summary statements, and discipline-specific academic terms and features related to the language of math. By the end of the ESL unit, students have had multiple opportunities to read, listen to, speak, and write[[24]](#footnote-24) everyday words (e.g., *meals, food,* and family vocabulary) and grammatical features (e.g., present tense verbs, basic sentence word order in English, yes/no questions with the verb *do* and *what*) needed to effectively communicate a summary of their findings.[[25]](#footnote-25) Ms. Wagner also attends grade-level meetings once a month, alternating grade levels and middle schools. This gives her a chance to connect with her students’ teachers about their progress learning/using language, specific areas they struggle with, and opportunities to strategize how to improve connections between content area and ESL instruction.[[26]](#footnote-26)  *Ms. Wagner’s scenario portrays ways in which self-contained ESL can provide focused, explicit language instruction while connecting to key topics from grade-level content standards. It also mentions how ELs continue learning language in SCI throughout the rest of the school day the school day, highlighting the dual responsibility for language development shared by both ESL and general education teachers. Finally, it also showcases the importance of maintaining flexibility when developing curricula, in order to address changes in student needs.* |

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| **Scenario 4: Self-Contained ESL, High School**  Ms. Coello teaches self-contained ESL at Scott High School. Her students are scheduled by language proficiency levels. Throughout the years, Ms. Coello has co-developed an ESL curriculum focused on language development needs of ELs that is aligned to WIDA Standards and key high school content area standards from the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. When teaching an ESL unit drawing from topics related to a specific content area, Ms. Coello meets with the content teachers to discuss content topics that can serve as contexts for ESL classes. For example, in preparation for an upcoming ESL unit connected to the language of social studies, she met with Mr. Campbell, the history teacher. They discussed and identified the driving language demands of one of Mr. Campbell’s units on the civil rights movement, and Ms. Coello was able to use that information to design an ESL unit. While Mr. Campbell works on teaching specific content area knowledge and skills related to the topic, Ms. Coello will focus on related [Key Uses of Academic Language](https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/Can-Do-Descriptors-Key-Uses-K-12-FAQs.pdf) that serve as the ESL unit’s FLGs. Ms. Coello’s conversations with content area teachers also give her insight into content standards, practices, and language demands in general education texts and tasks, which she can use to enhance her teaching and support her ELs’ content learning. Content area colleagues have also collaborated with Ms. Coello to incorporate strategies and activities to promote disciplinary academic language development into their lessons.[[27]](#footnote-27) Additionally, they have learned to integrate first language supports for ELs in content area instruction, mirroring the way Ms. Coello encourages her students to use their first language and cultural background to make sense of new learning, relate learning to previous experiences, and process complex ideas.[[28]](#footnote-28) Ms. Coello and her colleagues’ regular opportunities for collaboration are supported at the school level. Mr. Byrnes, the principal, has worked with ESL and general education teachers to provide scheduled planning time each quarter, during afterschool staff meetings, and annual professional development days.  *Scenario 4 is a good example of a self-contained ESL classroom at the secondary level. Ms. Coello follows a language-focused curriculum that also meaningfully connects with core content. This ESL curriculum, although it provides systematic and explicit instruction about language, is flexible enough to provide room for collaboration and connection between ESL and content area instruction. Ms. Coello’s primary role is to serve as the ESL teacher, but content area teachers often draw on her expertise to improve on their content sheltering and disciplinary language teaching techniques.*  *This scenario also highlights the importance of administrator support for collaboration between ESL and general education teachers. Administrator support is an essential component for ensuring that key structures for collaboration such as regular opportunities for instructional conversations, common planning time and peer observations are established and maintained.* |

**Push-In ESL**

In push-in ESL, the ESL teacher comes into general education classrooms to provide language instruction. Push-in ESL is delivered to small groups of ELs within the general education classroom, or to the whole class (ELs and proficient English speakers) through collaborative teaching arrangements such as co-teaching, parallel teaching, team teaching, and/or station teaching (Friend & Cook, 2007).

In light of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks’ emphasis on disciplinary literacy, co-teaching arrangements where additional time is spent on developing students’ discipline-specific academic language and literacy skills, can be beneficial for English-proficient students as well as ELs.

Because of its inherent collaborative nature (where ESL and general education teachers share instructional space), push-in ESL will necessarily reflect the specific context in which it is implemented. In practice, this means that no two push-in ESL settings will be identical. However, the following parameters should guide the design and implementation of these types of ESL settings within the framework of ESL instruction developed in this guidance:

* **Substantial level of teacher collaboration and training.**Push-in ESL requires extensive collaboration between ESL and general education teachers to ensure that classroom time is specifically devoted to systematic, explicit, and sustained language instruction.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Without this strong collaboration and common planning time to ensure this type of language instruction, push-in ESL can easily become SCI featuring the ESL teacher as an instructional assistant. Sustained professional collaboration requires teachers to develop, implement, and maintain formal structures and procedures to support collaborative practices. Beyond common planning and shared instructional time, ESL and general education teachers need opportunities to map, align, or develop curriculum and related materials, collaboratively assess student work, and jointly conduct parent teacher conferences (Honingsfeld & Dove, 2010). Moreover, several of these collaborative practices require teachers to apply a specific set of skills for which many general education and ESL teachers are not prepared (Arkoudis, 2006). Therefore, teachers should also be given opportunities to participate in joint professional development focused on developing their expertise in collaborative teaching practices for ELs.

**Strong administrator support.** Collaborative ESL instruction arrangements require high levels of administrator support in order to succeed (Davison, 2006). Administrator support is not needed only for logistical issues, such as scheduling and student assignment: building- and district-level administrators play an essential role in cultivating an inclusive culture that welcomes teacher collaboration and establishes a professional culture where key components of effective teaching partnerships can flourish (Santana, Scully, & Dixon, 2012).

For example, administrator support is critical for ensuring that ESL and mainstream teachers share an equal professional status, securing funding for professional development and curriculum initiatives, and monitoring the implementation of collaborative efforts so ELs’ needs are appropriately addressed.

**Language-focused curriculum***.* Push-in ESL settings allow for closer, more direct integration of content and language instruction than may be possible in self-contained or pull-out settings. An ESL teacher may tailor ESL instruction more closely to specific general education classroom curricula given more frequent co-planning opportunities and greater knowledge of specific upcoming activities and assessments. Regardless of the particular approach, the ESL curriculum should meet essential parameters established in this guidance: it should be a language-focused curriculum dedicated for ESL instruction that is aligned to the WIDA Standards; integrates grade-level appropriate topics and standards from the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks; and is based on the research, theory, and pedagogy of second language acquisition.

* **Careful consideration of EL population**. Some research on current ESL and general education teacher collaboration suggests that recently arrived immigrant students at early levels of English proficiency (newcomers) and SLIFE may require additional language-focused instruction and supports beyond what can be provided in push-in settings (Honingsfeld & Dove, 2010, pp. 47–48; Mabbot & Strohl, 1992). To better meet these students’ needs, it is beneficial to structure push-in ESL in combination with additional self-contained ESL instruction, as well as other program-level supports such as flexible scheduling, extended day or after-school programming, age-appropriate literacy instruction, peer mentoring, and qualified staff attending to socio-emotional needs (Robertson & Lafond, n.d.; WIDA, 2015).

Push-in ESL may look different across schools and districts, but the essential components of ESL instruction must be present. The following scenarios exemplify potential push-in ESL arrangements incorporating elements of ESL instruction as defined in this guidance.

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| **Scenario 5: Push-In ESL, Elementary School**  Ms. Blanchette teaches ESL at Harrison Elementary, where she meets with small groups of ELs in their general education classrooms during literacy centers. Her lessons are based on language objectives from ESL units of study in the context of grade-level content area standards and related language demands.[[30]](#footnote-30) Her curriculum is aligned to the WIDA Standards and draws from the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Although it is primarily focused on developing students’ academic, social, and instructional language proficiency, it also incorporates high-leverage academic practices and [Key Uses of Academic Language](https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/Can-Do-Descriptors-Key-Uses-K-12-FAQs.pdf) from the content frameworks such as “read, write, and speak grounded in evidence” (Cheuk, 2013; Michaels, 2013). This ESL curriculum was developed in collaboration with other general education teachers at Harrison and ESL teachers across the district. The curriculum development process helped Ms. Blanchette and general education teachers at Harrison clarify their roles and shared responsibility in promoting their ELs’ language development. Teachers agreed Ms. Blanchette’s instruction would emphasize high-leverage academic language discourse features, forms, and vocabulary related to ELA content topics. On their part, general education teachers would promote language development by focusing on language functions and features related to specific content areas.  For example, one of the groups Ms. Blanchette works with is a small group of level 2–3 ELs in second grade. One of the ELA/science units has students discuss facts about polar bears and their habitats, and write an explanation about how the Arctic habitat is changing and how these changes affect polar bears. Ms. Souza, the second-grade teacher, will teach content-specific vocabulary (*Arctic, habitat, shelter, adapt*, etc.) and the main components of an explanation (introduction, development of topic with facts, concluding statements) to all students, including adding additional supports and differentiation for ELs. Meanwhile, Ms. Blanchette will give ELs further opportunities to develop and practice academic language for the “Explain” key use within the context of the habitat’s topic. She will provide mini-lessons on words/phrases students can use to describe Arctic animals and their habitats *(snowy, camouflage, thick coat),* sentence structures that can be useful for orally sharing facts gathered from reading text (e.g., “One fact I learned about polar bears and their habitat is…”) and stating claims about information read (e.g., “Ice is important for polar bears because…”). Students develop and make choices with language to create meaning about the topic at the [discourse dimension](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/curriculum/definitions.pdf), while Ms. Blanchette also supports students’ use of language to organize and add cohesion to a growing amount of structured language use.  Because there are several ELs and native English speakers in this classroom who struggle with writing coherent paragraphs, Ms. Blanchette will also lead the whole class in an activity where they trace key nouns and referents (e.g., other nouns or pronouns used in place of nouns: *polar bear/it/animal*) in a familiar text used in the unit, and then use this technique to revise and improve written explanations. Ms. Blanchette also collaborates with other teachers during grade-level meetings, where she discusses student progress, upcoming lessons, and opportunities to connect the ESL and general education curriculum. Additionally, Ms. Blanchette capitalizes on the resources and experiences her ELs bring to school to support their language learning.[[31]](#footnote-31) For example, she often makes connections between ELs’ first language and the academic language they are learning, and purposefully chooses instructional resources that showcase her students’ experiences and backgrounds.  *Although Ms. Blanchette works with her ELs in general education classrooms, she still bases her instruction on a dedicated, language-focused curriculum. In this way she makes sure to address the range of linguistic needs ELs have when developing a new language, not just the language related to content area learning. She spends specific time with ELs on language development, during which content area topics and standards serve as a vehicle for learning English. Ms. Blanchette’s scenario also highlights the important role of collaboration between ESL and general education teachers to develop curriculum and clarify roles and responsibilities in promoting ELs’ language development.* |

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| **Scenario 6: Push-In ESL, Elementary School**  Mr. Elmore is an ESL teacher at Central Elementary School. He pushes in during the ELA block while the classroom teacher, Ms. Cabrera, provides instruction to other groups of students. Mr. Elmore works with a small group of fifth-grade level 3–4 ELs, providing instruction to accelerate their instructional, social, and academic language development. The rest of the day, students continue developing their disciplinary literacy and academic language with Ms. Cabrera, who shelters content area instruction in English.[[32]](#footnote-32) Mr. Elmore’s instruction is based on a dedicated, language-focused ESL curriculum that is aligned to the WIDA Standards and integrates content area standards from the fifth-grade Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The ESL curriculum was developed by Mr. Elmore and the rest of the fifth-grade team. They met over the summer to coordinate major content and language goals for the year, and develop an ESL curriculum that supports these ways of using language in the content areas.[[33]](#footnote-33) For example, during the first grading quarter all fifth graders at Central Elementary will read *Bud, not Buddy* in ELA, learn about Lewis and Clark’s expedition in social studies, expand their knowledge of fractions in math, and discuss plants in science. The team decided to focus end of unit assessments for that quarter on the language functions of Explain and Argue. For example, in math, students will write a persuasive letter to the principal proposing a new school schedule in which periods are ¾ to 1¼ hour long (ESE, 2015a), while in social studies they will create museum exhibits explaining the role of key historical characters in the Lewis and Clark expedition (ESE, 2015e). Meanwhile, to promote their academic language development, Mr. Elmore will work with his ELs on the “Explain” and “Argue” [Key Uses of Academic Language](https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/Can-Do-Descriptors-Key-Uses-K-12-FAQs.pdf). Because Mr. Elmore pushes into the ELA block, he will draw from ELA topics and standards while connecting to students’ background knowledge and building schema. He makes sure to develop his students’ skills across [key academic practices](http://ell.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/VennDiagram_practices_v11%208-30-13%20color.pdf) transferrable to other core content areas, such as “support analyses of a range of complex texts with evidence” and “build upon the ideas of others and articulate your own” in his lessons. Finally, he also provides opportunities for students to practice social and instructional language related to the types of tasks they will encounter in their other subjects (e.g., writing a persuasive letter, writing journal entries).[[34]](#footnote-34) Finally, Mr. Elmore and the first-grade team also regularly meet during the school year to discuss student progress and fine-tune lessons.  *Mr. Elmore’s push-in setting highlights the importance of collaboration between general education and ESL teachers. Teachers at Central Elementary have regularly scheduled collaboration time as well as additional paid time in the summer to work on the curriculum. Mr. Elmore’s instruction builds to and from his students’ grade-level content area instruction, while his language expertise informs his colleagues’ practice. He follows a dedicated ESL curriculum that is focused on language but also draws from the ELA and Literacy Curriculum Frameworks. Mr. Elmore focuses his instruction on cross-cutting key academic practices and uses of academic language selected during the summer curriculum development process. Developing their knowledge and skills in these practices and ways of using language will enable his students to develop their content area learning as well as their language skills. His ELs also learn academic language related to the content areas during their time with Ms. Cabrera, the general education teacher. This scenario also highlights the importance of considering ELs’ proficiency levels when making decisions about ESL instruction settings.*  *Whereas Mr. Elmore’s push-in curriculum works well with his* Transitional *students (WIDA levels 3–5), it may not be the most appropriate setting for students at very early proficiency levels, who may need additional instruction on language beyond what can be provided in a push-in ESL setting.* |

Successful push-in ESL instruction can be more difficult to implement at the secondary level, due to the large number of students assigned to different content area teachers, scheduling, and other logistical and instructional issues (Mabbot & Strohl, 1992). Push-in ESL may also be difficult to implement with *Foundational* ELs (WIDA levels 1–2), who may require additional support to develop their language and learn content than what secondary teachers can provide in push-in settings. However, with administrator support, effective professional development, and opportunities for common planning and teaching time, ESL and content area teacher teams can creatively develop ways to collaborate to support ELs’ learning.

### 2.3.2 Common Misconceptions about ESL Instruction

ESL instruction, as defined in this guidance, includes specific essential characteristics such as a dedicated instructional time, language-driven curricula building into and from content area standards (Curriculum Framework and Evaluation Criteria Committee, 2015), and instruction focused on opportunities for meaningful, authentic interaction. This way of conceptualizing ESL instruction may differ from the way in which ESL has been previously implemented in some Massachusetts districts. The following statements reflect a few common misconceptions about ESL instruction as presented in this document:

* **Misconception #1:** **ESL instruction is considered an intervention, or part of Tier 2 instruction**. In the Massachusetts Tiered System of Support, Tier 1 or Core Instruction represents culturally responsive, quality instruction that all students receive. For ELs, Tier 1 includes English language development instruction, like ESL, delivered by qualified teachers (WIDA, 2013). As the National Center on Response to Intervention notes, instruction within these settings would not be viewed as an intervention (Tiers 2 or 3), but rather part of ELs’ core instruction (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2011).[[35]](#footnote-35) On the other hand, since ESL instruction is not an intervention, ELs who need additional instructional support for content area learning should have access to appropriate interventions in addition to ESL instruction.
* **Misconception #2: ELs with special education needs who already receive special education services do not necessarily need to also participate in ESL instruction**. This idea often arises due to scheduling conflicts between special education services and ESL instruction. However, ELs with disabilities must be provided with ESL instruction as well as with the full range of academic opportunities and supports afforded non-ELs, including special education services (ESE, 2015b). Whereas special education services address issues related to learning disabilities and directly support content area learning, ESL instruction provides dedicated instructional time to adequately meet ELs’ linguistic needs.

ELs with special education needs require, and are legally entitled to, both sets of supports in order to succeed academically.

* **Misconception #3: ESL teachers can serve as resource teachers who support ELs in general education classrooms*.*** ESL teachers may deliver ESL instruction within the general education classroom in certain instructional settings (such as push-in ESL or co-teaching arrangements), but their primary role should be to provide instruction focused on promoting ELs’ language development. ESL teachers bring expertise in second language development and how to meet language learners’ diverse linguistic, cultural, and academic needs. They must be given the appropriate time, space, and curricular resources to successfully accomplish this task. ESL teachers are not to be used as paraprofessionals or additional support staff to scaffold content area learning in general education classrooms. Supporting and/or scaffolding content area learning is the primary role of content area teachers.
* **Misconception #4:** **Dually certified teachers can provide adequate support for ELs during content area instruction and do not need to set aside a dedicated time of the day for ESL instruction***.* Although teachers with both content area and ESL credentials may be well qualified to meet ELs’ academic and linguistic needs, they still need enough instructional time to focus on language instruction in order to accelerate their students’ language development. Content area teachers are responsible for helping all their students develop the sophisticated academic language and literacy practices of their discipline, along with the key knowledge and skills outlined in their respective standards—scaffolding and differentiating instruction as needed. ELs need this attention to language throughout their content area instruction, but also require instructional time strategically focused on language learning in order to systematically develop critical English knowledge, skills, and abilities to succeed academically. This intense focus on language may not be possible during the allocated time for content area learning. Therefore, a specific, dedicated time for ESL instruction addressing more than discipline-specific academic language is important for meeting the needs of ELs. A dually certified teacher serving both ESL and content area teaching roles must plan for this dedicated ESL instructional time in the larger daily schedule.

The scenarios below illustrate these common misconceptions and how they can negatively impact

ESL instruction as defined in this guidance.

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| **Scenario 7: Misconceptions about ESL, Elementary School**  Ms. Lapehn teaches at Newcombe Elementary. She pulls out ELs for about 30 minutes a day for language instruction. Most of her lessons are based on the district’s ELA curriculum corresponding to her ELs’ grade levels, which she modifies to make more comprehensible for her students. She also adds activities focused on instructional and social language, incorporating topics from math, science, and social studies when she has an opportunity. She tries to integrate content topics because she knows her ELs regularly miss these classes to meet with her. This is often a difficult task: her ELs are grouped by proficiency levels across two or three grade levels, and there are only a few common content area topics they can all study together. She occasionally collaborates with general education teachers, mostly when her students have a special project or field trip coming up.  *Ms. Lapehn’s scenario highlights several problematic issues with the way self-contained ESL can be mistakenly set up. First, although her instruction integrates content topics, it does not address content area standards in a way that would ensure that her students have access to the core content instruction they miss while they are pulled out for ESL. This interferes with their access to grade-level curricula and, ultimately, their academic achievement. Second, Ms. Lapehn has limited opportunities to regularly collaborate with general education teachers, which hinders her ability to build to and from disciplinary practices and ways of using language. This lack of collaboration also affects general education teachers, who would benefit from Ms. Lapehn’s language expertise when planning lessons, designing scaffolds and supports, and assessing ELs during content area instruction. Finally, Ms. Lapehn’s ESL instruction is tailored to her students’ language proficiency levels, but the allotted time is not sufficient to meaningfully address their language needs.* |
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| **Scenario 8: Misconceptions about ESL, Elementary School**  Mr. Brown is an elementary ESL teacher who pushes into general education classrooms. He helps ELs learn content and complete class assignments. He modifies classroom materials and adapts assessments as needed, and often provides additional small group instruction to clarify content taught. He also serves as a resource teacher for other students, working on remediation, interventions, and other issues that the homeroom teacher needs help addressing.  *Scenario 8 showcases common misconceptions about push-in ESL. Mr. Brown augments content instruction by co-teaching, working with small groups, helping develop language objectives, and helping the general education teacher make instruction more comprehensible for ELs. Although these are great practices for supporting ELs in general education classrooms, Mr. Brown is not providing the type of language-driven instruction required for ESL instruction in Massachusetts. He functions more as a paraprofessional aide than as an ESL teacher, providing additional support to students rather than dedicated, systematic, and explicit language instruction.* |

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| **Scenario 9: Misconceptions about ESL, Middle School**  Mr. Morris is a middle school ESL teacher. He teaches level 1–2 seventh-grade ELs in a self-contained ESL classroom. Mr. Morris teaches one period each of math, science, social studies, reading, and ELA. He has a planning period when his students go to specials (music, gym, and art) with their English-proficient peers. He follows the district’s general education seventh-grade curriculum for each subject as best he can, and makes sure to align his units to the WIDA Standards. He also makes necessary adaptations to ensure that his instruction is comprehensible to ELs at these early proficiency levels. Mr. Morris’ lessons focus primarily on content but also aim to develop his students’ academic language. He includes language objectives that reflect the academic language needed to learn and demonstrate learning in the content areas. Although he is very busy planning for multiple subjects every day, he meets with content area peers to talk about fun activities or materials for his classes whenever he has a chance.  *Mr. Morris’ scenario highlights ways in which self-contained ESL can be set up as modified SCI rather than language-focused teaching. His lessons are focused primarily on content learning, with language development as a secondary goal, as evidenced by the fact that he follows a content area curriculum instead of one that is focused on language development. Mr. Morris incorporates academic language embedded in content standards into his teaching, but his instructional decisions are based primarily on content learning instead of his students’ language needs. Because language is best learned in meaningful contexts, the fact that Mr. Morris draws from academic subjects, practices, and ways of thinking will benefit his students.*  *However, in order to successfully navigate the demands of secondary school, ELs need more than an uneven mixture of ESL and sheltered content instruction. Mr. Morris’ students need access to focused language instruction devoted to developing their social, instructional, and academic English in addition to comprehensible grade-level content area instruction taught by highly qualified teachers. Finally, this scenario is problematic because Mr. Morris does not hold appropriate content area credentials, yet is responsible for providing all content instruction for the ELs he teaches.* |

### 2.3.3 Supporting Effective ESL Instruction

Effective ESL instruction, whether delivered in newcomer, push-in, or self-contained settings, requires significant support from district and school administrators. How can administrators support ESL teachers pushing into mainstream classrooms and those pulling out ELs? What structures must be in place for ESL teachers to succeed regardless of their instructional setting? Below are a few ideas to consider:

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| **Structures to Support ESL** | **Additional Structures to Support Push-in ESL** | **Additional Structures to Support Pull-Out and Self-Contained ESL** |
| * Inclusion of ESL teachers/leaders in district and school leadership teams * Involvement of ESL teachers/leaders in all major district and school initiatives * Common planning time for ESL and content area teachers * Ongoing professional development on sheltering content and promoting ELs’ language development for all teachers who work with ELs * Ongoing professional development in collaborative and co-teaching strategies * A clear, well-communicated set of policies and procedures for EL instruction (such as defined content area and ESL teacher roles for each type of ESL instructional setting, student grouping, scheduling, assessment, etc.) * A language-focused curriculum aligned with the WIDA Standards and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, and related materials * Skillfully designed student schedules ensuring that each EL has access to grade-level curricula and focused language instruction * Strategies to engage EL parents at school and district events/initiatives * Staff support for both content area and ESL teachers (i.e., ESL coaches and paraprofessionals) * Appropriate resources, materials, and instructional space to support specific instructional arrangement (e.g., pull-out, push-in) | * Thoughtful arrangement of mainstream classroom space and lesson organization allowing small group instruction * Careful grouping of ELs by common characteristics (language proficiency levels, first language, etc.) * Formal processes and procedures to support collaboration, such as common planning time for all teachers in the general education classroom (content area, ESL, special education, etc.), protocols for shared assessment of student learning, etc. * Established collaboration protocols attending to key components of effective teacher partnerships (e.g., defined roles, clear tasks, equal status, shared curriculum development process, flexible lesson delivery) | * Adequate classroom space, materials, and resources for a separate ESL teaching environment * Opportunities for ESL teachers to collaborate with other school/district content and ESL teachers * Processes and procedures to support collaboration between general education teachers and ESL teachers in pull-out settings |

These structures are essential to support the work of pull-out and push-in ESL teachers described above. Without a viable, dedicated ESL curriculum aligned to the WIDA Standards and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, common time to plan with content area teachers, expertise in collaborative teaching strategies, and careful grouping and scheduling teachers like Ms. Gooch or Ms. Coello would not be able to deliver ESL instruction effectively. Some support structures, such as student grouping and scheduling, can be made available at the school-level, but others require district-level coordination. For example, implementing initiatives to develop a language-focused ESL curriculum, craft common policies and procedures for ESL services, and provide professional development about collaborative teaching will require district-level resources and leadership. Similarly, adequate resources such as materials and instructional space tailored to specific instructional arrangements (e.g., push-in, self-contained, etc.) are foundational to ensure ESL instruction is effective.

**Setting Up ESL: Questions to Consider**

To ensure that the ESL component of a program for ELs provides systematic, explicit, and sustained language instruction, careful thinking must be devoted to choosing how, when, and where ESL instruction will be provided. Several choices must be made when establishing successful ESL services, such as whether the ESL teacher will push into mainstream classes or pull out students and how to group students once that choice has been made (by grade level/s, by language proficiency level, by first language, etc.).

Consider the following questions when setting up ESL instruction:

1. How many ELs have been identified? What primary languages do they speak and what are their English proficiency levels? How are they distributed across grade levels and homerooms/mainstream classrooms?
2. Are EL services set up so that all ELs receive both language instruction and content instruction provided by teachers certified in the appropriate areas (ESL for language instruction, SEI and content area for content instruction)?
3. Does the schedule allow the ESL teacher to group students by language proficiency or will ELs need to be grouped by grade level?
4. Is the schedule set up so the ESL teacher can meet with students for enough time?
5. Is there time built into teachers’ daily schedule so ESL and content area teachers can plan instruction and collaborate effectively?
6. Does the ESL teacher have a dedicated ESL curriculum to follow to ensure that time is focused on language development and not sheltering content?
7. Are there enough ESL/language specialists to provide services to all identified ELs for an adequate amount of time?
8. Are collaborative relationships between ESL and content area teachers defined ahead of time?

Do ESL and general education teachers collaborate regularly on key instructional components for ELs, such as lesson planning, choice and modification of materials, assessment design and delivery, and program placement?

1. When thinking about push-in ESL:
   * Are there specific ESL and content area teachers who are interested in developing a successful co-teaching relationship?
   * Are mainstream classrooms set up to accommodate small group targeted language instruction by the ESL teacher?
   * Have content area and ESL teachers received training in co-teaching and collaborative strategies?
2. When thinking about pull-out ESL:
   * Is there space available for a separate classroom for the ESL teacher?
   * Are these ELs integrated into as much core content instruction and specials as possible when they are not being pulled out for ESL?
3. Once a language program model or instructional arrangement has been chosen,
   * Are all key stakeholders (administrators, parents, students, teachers, and support staff) clear about the program’s essential components?
   * Are program policies well-articulated and known by all stakeholders?
   * Are district/school staff clear on their specific roles in the program?
   * Is the program appropriately resourced (e.g., materials, space)?



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Commissioner

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1. Although research on academic language for ELs in K–12 settings is incomplete, we are defining “academic language” as the language one needs to succeed in general education classrooms. For more information about how to conceptualize academic language, see Anstrom et al. (2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Click [here](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/guidance/SLIFE-Guidance.docx) for more guidance about students with interrupted or limited formal education (SLIFE). OLA guidance for ELs with disabilities is coming soon. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. U.S. Const. amend. XIV; Equal Educational Opportunities Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1701 et seq. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Castañeda v. Pickard, 648 F. 2d 989 (5th Cir. 1981). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. WIDA Essential Action 7 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 34–36). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. WIDA Essential Action 6 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 31–33). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. WIDA Essential Action 4 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 25–27). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. WIDA Essential Action 14 and 15 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 58–66). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. WIDA Essential Action 3 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 20–24). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. For more information about ESL instruction guidelines in Massachusetts, see ESE’s [*Guidance on Identification, Assessment, Placement, and Reclassification of English Language Learners*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/guidance/guidance.pdf)*.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. WIDA Essential Action 8 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 37–39). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. WIDA Essential Actions 4 and 11 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 25–27, 46–48). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Equal Educational Opportunities Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1701 et seq.; Lau v. Nichols, 414 U.S. 563 (1974). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. WIDA Essential Action 3 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 20–24). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. WIDA Essential Action 7 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 34–36.). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. WIDA Essential Action 6 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 31–33). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. WIDA Essential Action 11 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 46–48). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. WIDA Essential Actions 14 and 15 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 58–66). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. WIDA Essential Actions 2, 10, and 11 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 17–19, 43–45, 46–48). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. WIDA Essential Action 3 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 20–24). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. WIDA Essential Action 12 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 49–51). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. WIDA Essential Action 15 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 64–66). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. WIDA Essential Actions 4 and 11 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 25–27, 46–48). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. WIDA Essential Action 13 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 52–57). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. WIDA Essential Action 10 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 43–45). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. WIDA Essential Action 14 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 58–63). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. WIDA Essential Action 14 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 58–63). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. WIDA Essential Action 3 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 20–24). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. WIDA Essential Action 9 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 40–42). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. WIDA Essential Actions 4 and 11 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 25–27, 46–48). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. WIDA Essential Action 3 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 20–24). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. WIDA Essential Action 15 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 64–66). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. WIDA Essential Action 14 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 58–63). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. WIDA Essential Action 10 (Gottlieb, 2013, pp. 43–45). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. See also the [RTI’s Action Network](http://www.rtinetwork.org/)’s [Considerations for English Language Learners](http://www.rtinetwork.org/getstarted/sld-identification-toolkit/ld-identification-toolkit-considerations-for-ell): “ESL instruction, is best understood as another component of Tier 1 rather than being part of more temporary tiered interventions in RtI. Students who are ELLs require ongoing and sustained instruction in English language, ESL, as part of the core areas for as long as possible (Dixon, Zhao, & Shin, 2012).” [↑](#footnote-ref-35)