School Journey Profile: Building Effective Practices with Grant Funding

2026

Brockton: Manthala George, Jr. Global Studies Elementary School Using Intensive Assistance Grant (IAG) Funding to Expand and Strengthen a Dual Language Model

Overview of Grant:
The Intensive Assistance Grant (IAG) is an updated model of the School Redesign Grant (SRG) that had been in place since 2010. IAG is a federally funded, competitive grant that supports schools that are persistently in the lowest percentiles on our state's accountability system. The purpose of this grant is to support the delivery of high-quality instruction for every student, in every classroom, every day.

An integral component of IAG involves implementing the district's identified instructional priority. With support from district leaders, identified schools adapt the district's instructional priority to drive improvement. School and district leaders revisit this priority is revisited annually to ensure it reflects the most important focus for improving educational outcomes for students.

Students Served:
Manthala George Jr. Global Studies Elementary (the George) serves a highly diverse, high-needs student population and centers its identity on a whole-school dual language model that reflects its community. Located in Brockton, Massachusetts, a highly diverse city of approximately 100,000 residents, the George serves almost 850 of the city's youngest residents, hosting a grade span of pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Compared with 42% of students in Massachusetts being considered "low-income," nearly 70% of students at the George are identified as such. Similarly, 79% of students at the George fall in the "high needs" student group (an unduplicated number of students who are English learners, students with disabilities, or low-income) whereas the state average is over 20 percentage points less (56%). Perhaps most significantly, 34% of the school's students are English learners with 54% whose first language is not English, which is twice the state average. Taking pride in the diverse composition of its community population has led the school to establish their identity as a successful dual language school.

FAST FACTS

Manthala George, Jr. Global Studies Elementary School (2025-2026)

Teachers:
46.4

Students:
879

EL:
32.8%

FLNE:
55.1%

High Needs:
76.5%

The Challenge:

In 2019, the school faced severe academic underperformance, with low achievement and low growth across student groups, especially English learners and students with disabilities. Manthala George, Jr. Global Studies School was identified in the Commonwealth's State Accountability System as "Requiring Assistance or Intervention" because their achievement was in the 3rd percentile. Student growth was low in both ELA and

math with declines in ELA performance in most student groups. Percentiles for their students with disabilities, high needs, and English learners/former English learners were all below the 10th percentile in both ELA and math, and less than half (49%) of their English learners were making progress toward English proficiency. The school identified some key challenges to address:

- Inconsistency in rigor and cognitively demanding tasks
- Lack of a unified curriculum
- Limited collaboration time
- 55% of ELs not meeting ACCESS progress targets
- MCAS accountability percentile: 3%
- Writing as the lowest performing domain

The Turning Point:

Though beset by low academic performance, the school engaged in focused work on climate, culture, and trauma response starting in 2015 and had continued that work with persistence, which ultimately set them up to successfully undertake its next steps. In 2018, the school received a state innovation school grant that allowed them to start strategizing a long-term plan for a more robust dual language program that would offer Portuguese and French as target languages in addition to Spanish. Portuguese and French were added as program languages following a community interest survey conducted in 2015. While some families have literacy in these languages due to their home country schooling, the high-incidence languages of the school community are Haitian Kreyol, Cape Verdean Kriolu, and Spanish. The school sought to create a coherent vision for their building and was now poised to initiate concrete steps to realize that vision and become a building of teachers of language. School and district leaders turned their focus to intentional professional development, instruction, and a growth mindset while remaining steadfast in their commitment to fostering a dual language program they hoped could become a successful, multilingual, whole-school model marked by student achievement.

The school transformed teaching and learning through:

- *intentional collaboration and planning*
- *grant support*
- *expanded dual language programming*
- *strong instructional practices*
- *focused professional development*
- *implementation of high-quality instructional materials*

In 2019 the school was awarded the Intensive Assistance Grant (IAG) (then known as the School Redesign Grant) from the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE), which provided federal funding needed to grow the dual language program in tandem with building instructional expectations fueled by high buy-in and a growth mindset teachers embraced. Through the grant, the school received an annual Monitoring Site Visit (MSV) from the Office of Effective Practices (OEP) at DESE, which helped school leaders identify challenges and, in turn, allowed them to approach instructional leaders at the district to plan next steps and supports.

Enhanced with a clear goal of delivering rigorous instruction, exemplary language development with high expectations, and adopting a laser focus on data, teachers and school and district leadership increased the number of dual language classrooms across all grade levels. In addition to the 12 dual language Spanish classrooms, the school now houses 12 Portuguese classrooms and 11 French classrooms. Continued attention to its special education population, the school also now houses 7 integrated special education pre-k classrooms to initiate early support to both its students with disabilities and its English learner students with disabilities (ELSWD) population, addressing the achievement gap that data dictated as a need.

The Impact on Outcomes, Instruction, and Professional Learning:

Outcomes:

As the school expanded its dual language program, students realized academic achievement in greater numbers. In 2025, 68% of the school's English learner population was making impressive progress toward English proficiency, putting it well ahead of the state average of 51%. Growth in both ELA and math improved in every student group, and the school climbed to the 35th percentile of like schools across the state, up from the 3rd percentile in 2019.

Student growth and English learner proficiency improved significantly, statewide performance rose dramatically, and success was driven by a strong, collaborative partnership between the school and district.

Instruction:

In classrooms, students experience seamless transitions from English instruction to target language instruction under the guidance of skilled educators using collaboratively planned and paced lessons, all of which are guided by thoughtful language objectives (a requirement in all classrooms). Expectations of students include communicating ideas and information in speaking and writing, and actively listening to peers and the teachers. Further strengthening language development, teachers have developed 'Conversation Posters' (based on Academic Conversations by Jeff Zwiers and Marie Crawford), which align with WIDA's emphasis on academic discourse, language functions, and student interaction**.** Posters appear in each target language and contain sentence stems for asking and responding to questions along with visual representations of correlating symbols and hand gestures (Figure 1). Posters also display "Behaviors of Academic Conversations" containing stems and expectations and are displayed in all classrooms (Figure 1).

Figure 1:

Symbol	Hand Motion	Prompt for Asking Questions	Prompts for Responding
Main Idea/ Theme		• Why do you think the author wrote this? • What is the text mostly about? • What is the main idea?	• I think the author wrote it because..... • The text is mostly about..... • The main idea is ...
Tell Me More		• Can you tell me more about? • Why do you think that?	• I think it means that.... • I think _____ because _____.
How You Know		• Can you give an example? • Can you show me where it says? • Can you find evidence from the text? • How do you know that?	• For example..... • The author says... • The text says..... • In the text...
Build On		• Can you add to this idea? • Do you agree? Do you disagree? • Tell me more.	• I would add that.... • I agree because .... I disagree because ...
Make Connections		• What does the text make you think of?	• The text makes me think of ....
Retell and Summarize		• What happened in the text? • Can you sequence the events in the text?	• At the beginning ..... • In the middle .... • At the end ... • First, ... Next, ... Then, ... Last, ...



All classrooms display a meaningful language objective, now an expectation within the school culture. Across classrooms, practices are aligned and follow the consistent content delivery schedules and/or routines. For example, all Kindergarten classes teach a 30-minute foundational skills block simultaneously, target language classes follow the same instructional routines as English classes, and teachers employ the Wonders curriculum scope and sequence to build units in Portuguese and French.

Perhaps the most powerful evidence of success, however, is the warm and positive interactions between students and teachers. Classrooms are characterized by bright, clean, and organized workspaces, academic

discourse, supportive teacher guidance, and safe and supportive environments in which to learn -- evidence of their long-term work to promote a positive trauma-responsive climate and culture.

Professional Learning:
Improvements could not begin without targeted, high-quality professional development (PD). The school identified key strategic objectives around collaboration, rigorous instruction, and language acquisition and determined that through ongoing, cumulative professional development, improvement could be made.

School leaders revisited the school schedule to ensure that educators had collaboration time built in so they could engage in planning and developing aligned instructional practices, data analysis, and student success monitoring. The schedule was thus adjusted to allow teachers to meet collaboratively not only in grade level teams, but also vertical teams and as co-teachers and target language teachers. Teachers now have protected collaboration time to plan, where they can create lessons, do important curriculum work, and drive initiatives outlined in their strategic objective.

Professional development around rigor was more complex and long-term. To shift schoolwide mindset and practice high expectations for all students, the school participated in districtwide PD with Jon Saphier, author of *High Expectations Teaching*. Building on that as a foundation, teachers at the school began applying the principles of high expectations to PD around teaching English learners. The school provided 15 hours of hybrid PD on TESOL's, *The 6 Principals for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners*, a training to empower adult learners in language pedagogy and acquisition.

Subsequent years of professional development have included a partnership with MABE (Multi-State Association of Bilingual Education) to deliver high-quality professional development focused on dual language–specific pedagogical practices, including metalinguistic awareness, building oracy, academic conversations, Teaching for Biliteracy, biliteracy curriculum mapping, and translanguaging practices. Each professional development focus has contributed to building the capacity of dual language educators, with staff actively taking ownership of their learning. For example, the academic conversation posters were a direct result of collaboration following professional development on building oracy and academic conversations.

Principal Natalie Pohl credits teachers at the school for doing the exhaustive work of curriculum integration and digging into a biliteracy map during the summer months. Teachers have continued curriculum refinement, meeting during collaboration time with a coach to align curriculum for dual language purposes. They outline a scope and sequence week-by-week, developing lesson slides from Wonders, their selected high-quality literacy curriculum. Teachers also worked with a consultant who led their phonics skills work.

School leaders have also made instructional expectations clear, aligned with the PD teachers have received. And rigor, along with language development, are always at the forefront. In terms of monitoring instruction, walkthroughs are the norm and a testament to the degree of professional trust that exists among all educators (teachers and administrators) in the school.

School and District Partnership:

As the gains continue, Pohl notes that the work requires commitment and strong collaboration, not only with teachers and the school community, but with the district. Embarking on turnaround work should never be for schools to do in isolation. Partnership with the district is vital with "both sides pulling their weight." Leadership at the school attributes much of the school's success to the district's PK-8 Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning, the PK-8 Director of Bilingual Education, and the department head of Bilingual and ESL Services. According to Pohl, district leaders work together to support the school collaboratively, helping her to make connections and pursue funding proposals, and sharing in responsibility for customized professional development to fit the school's unique dual language context. District leaders continue working with the school to "navigate, align, communicate, (identify) funding, and structure" the part needed to make the model work.

When asked what she would tell schools in their first year of turnaround, Pohl emphasizes the critical role of the district, stating that it is "not a question to ask just a school. Having a principal take the lead of curriculum along with everything else – that is a lot, and schools need support from the district." In the end, Pohl is grateful for the "collaborative district-school partnership" that has allowed the school to grow into its vision.

They (teachers) march forward with the work no matter what is before them. There was a full curriculum adoption that took place. . .and adapted for dual language. Teachers were bought in. All in, valuing their kids and families. Leadership and collaboration matter. (It is) so much better together than alone, in service of kids, multilingualism, and dual language.

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