Massachusetts World Language Standards Focus Group and Implementation Services

Round 2 Focus Group Report

2021

# MA World Language Standards Focus Group and Implementation Services: Round 2 Focus Group Report

# Introduction

To ensure that the forthcoming *Massachusetts World Languages Framework* (henceforth *MA WL Framework*) is actionable, inclusive, and relevant to all educators, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) contracted the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) to conduct research on the needs of various less commonly taught courses and programs. The *MA World Language Standards Focus Group and Implementation Services* project includes three major activities: (1) facilitating two rounds of six virtual focus groups; (2) conducting a literature review of best practices for eight areas of focus; and (3) developing Quick Reference Guides (QRGs) to support teachers’ use and implementation of the framework.

In this report we summarize findings from the second round of focus group sessions. The purpose of these focus groups was to gather feedback on how information compiled in the literature review should be used to inform the development of the QRGs. The six courses and programs represented in the focus groups were identified by DESE as having special considerations related to world language education, and these include: (1) languages with diverse written representations (LDWRs); (2) classical languages; (3) American Sign Language; (4) world language courses for heritage speakers/signers; (5) elementary world language programs; and (6) world language courses for students with disabilities.

Following an overview of the methodology, we present key findings for each focus group, and the report concludes with overall recommendations for meeting the needs of world language educators in the focal areas. Three appendices are included with this report: (1) Appendix A: Participant Contact Information; (2) Appendix B: Focus Group Protocol; and (3) Appendix C: Focus Group Procedures.

# Methodology

Focus group participants included Massachusetts world language educators and program administrators who work in one of the six focal areas and indicated a willingness to serve as a content advisor for the project. Participants were primarily recruited by DESE through targeted outreach to world language educators, coordinators, and administrators within the community; all participants in the second round of focus groups previously participated in the first round of focus groups. Prior to the focus group meetings, individuals who expressed an interest in serving as content advisors were contacted by members of the CAL research team to confirm their participation and determine their availability for scheduling the sessions.

Two weeks prior to the first meeting for the second round of focus group sessions, we sent all confirmed participants a copy of their focal area’s sections from the Round 1 focus group report and literature review. We asked participants to spend 1-2 hours reviewing these documents while thinking about how the information gathered should be used to inform the development of their focal area’s QRG as well as the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and assessment QRGs. Following the focus group sessions, participants received professional development points (PDPs) to recognize their participation in this project.

A total of 22 participants were a part of the six virtual focus groups, and each group included between two and five participants. Participants completed a short demographic survey following the focus group. Table 1 summarizes the demographic information reported by 19 of the 22 total participants across all six groups.

Table 1. Round 1 focus group participant demographic information

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Demographic category** | ***n*** |
| Current role\* |  |
| Administrator | 2 |
| Coordinator | 5 |
| Teacher | 16 |
| Years of language teaching experience |  |
| 1-5 years | 3 |
| 6-10 years | 5 |
| 11-15 years | 2 |
| 16-20 years | 2 |
| More than 20 years | 7 |
| World languages taught\* |  |
| ASL | 1 |
| Arabic | 1 |
| French | 4 |
| German | 1 |
| Greek | 1 |
| Italian | 1 |
| Latin | 5 |
| Mandarin | 2 |
| Portuguese | 2 |
| Spanish | 10 |
| No response | 1 |
| Gender |  |
| Female | 18 |
| Male | 1 |
| Race\* |  |
| Asian | 2 |
| White | 14 |
| Other | 4 |
| Ethnicity |  |
| Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin | 3 |
| Not Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin | 16 |
| Location |  |
| Central Massachusetts | 1 |
| Eastern Massachusetts | 17 |
| No response | 1 |
| District type |  |
| Suburban | 11 |
| Rural | 1 |
| Urban | 7 |

\*Participants could select more than one role, more than one language, and more than one race.

As Table 1 shows, most participants were experienced world language teachers working in suburban or urban districts in Eastern Massachusetts. Nearly all participants identified as female, and most participants described themselves as white individuals who are not Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin. While a variety of world languages were represented, Spanish is the language that participants most frequently reported working with, followed by Latin and French. Additional information about the participants in each group is included in relevant sections of the findings, and Appendix A provides contact information for all focus group participants.

Virtual focus group sessions lasted approximately 90 minutes and were conducted between Monday, November 2 and Thursday, November 12, 2020. All focus groups were facilitated using the online meeting platform Zoom, and participants were asked to use both audio and video capabilities for the duration of the session. Each session was led by one CAL facilitator, and an additional CAL staff member served as a notetaker to document participants’ responses. A PowerPoint discussion guide was developed and provided via screenshare to support both facilitators and participants throughout the sessions. Each focus group was organized into the following sections: introductions; background; procedures and guidelines; discussion; and summary and conclusion.

In the introduction, facilitators noted that feedback about the standards may not result in direct changes to the framework document, and that participant comments would be used to inform the QRGs and other supplementary materials. The discussion portion of the session asked about the major topic areas presented in each focal area’s section of the literature review, as well as recommendations for the focal area’s QRG, and the SEL and assessment QRGs. Participants were encouraged to provide responses through the lens of their experience working with the less common course or program being discussed, and a series of general questions for each topic area (see Appendix B) were presented to elicit these responses.

During the session, the notetaker captured comments and discussion from the group, and the facilitator confirmed key points and conclusions. Focus group sessions were not audio or video recorded. Following each session, the facilitator and notetaker met to synthesize the discussion, review notes, and write a brief memo summarizing important aspects of the group’s discussion. The research team then reviewed notes and synthesis memos to determine key takeaways from each group. Appendix B and Appendix C provide an overview of the protocols and procedures followed before, during, and after each focus group session.

# Findings

This section of the report presents key findings from the focus groups. Findings are organized into the following sections: (1) languages with diverse written representations (LDWRs); (2) classical languages; (3) American Sign Language; (4) world language courses for heritage speakers/signers; (5) elementary world language programs; and (6) world language courses for students with disabilities. Each section provides a description of the participants, a short summary of the findings, five key takeaways, and implications and recommendations for educator resources, tools, and professional development. We use the term “framework” to refer to the *MA WL Framework*, and we use the term “framework materials” to capture recommendations that may apply to either the framework document or supporting materials (including the QRGs).

## 1. Languages with Diverse Written Representations Group

### Focus Group Profile

Three educators participated in the focus group on how information gathered from the literature review should be used to inform the development of the languages with diverse written representations (LDWRs) QRG. The group included one middle school teacher, one middle and high school teacher, and one elementary school teacher who also teaches online classes for a university. One participant reported working with Arabic, one participant reported working with Mandarin, and one participant reported working with Russian.

### Summary

In this focus group session, participants were asked to react to the following topics covered in the literature review: (1) relevant factors for English speakers learning LDWRs; (2) alphabets, characters, and symbols; (3) reading and writing; and (4) phonology and tonal pronunciations. Overall, the group responded positively to the literature review findings. Although participants agreed with much of the information presented, they critiqued the framing of some conclusions drawn from the research and their applicability to the teaching of different LDWRs in K-12 settings. In the discussion, participants examined how various recommendations compare with their own teaching practices and experiences, and they also pointed out some additional considerations for future resource development. The following section highlights key findings from the group.

### Key Takeaways

#### 1.1 Given the differences between research and actual teaching practices, recommendations for instruction and assessment should be framed as one potential approach rather than a one-size-fits-all approach to working with LDWRs.

Throughout the discussion, participants highlighted how best practices from the literature may not always transfer to the classroom for various reasons, and the group agreed that students may benefit from research-based instructional strategies beyond those mentioned in the literature review findings. Although participants appreciated that attempts were made to include research involving various languages and contexts, they requested that recommendations be presented as one of many potentially effective approaches, as some may be more appropriate than others when teaching different LDWRs in K-12 settings. The group also underscored the importance of considering students’ grade, proficiency, and developmental levels when implementing different guidance and suggestions included in the literature review and recommended including educators’ perspectives and experiences in framework materials, as these may be different from the research findings.

#### 1.2 There is a need for greater recognition of the challenges involved in learning LDWRs, and framework materials must emphasize how these challenges affect students’ learning experiences and educators’ teaching practices.

The group praised the section of the literature review discussing relevant factors for English speakers learning LDWRs, and they appreciated the recognition of the overall challenges involved for both students and teachers in this context. Participants agreed that the needs and difficulties associated with LDWRs are not often considered, and they requested that this emphasis be made in framework materials to increase visibility and advocacy for this group of languages. The participants reiterated comments provided during the first round of focus groups, including the need to highlight difficulties in cultural understanding for native English speakers learning LDWRs, which was not mentioned in the literature review. One participant emphasized the importance of discussing and overcoming stereotypes with students who are new to learning the language, as many cultures associated with LDWRs are seen as “more foreign” than those associated with more commonly taught languages. In addition, the group raised concerns about how the relative difficulty of LDWRs and different student outcomes based on instructional hours may affect requirements for various standardized tests and certifications (e.g., Seal of Biliteracy). Participants requested that issues involving high-stakes assessments for LDWRs be discussed in framework materials, and one participant also recommended including best practices for addressing various challenges involved in learning LDWRs, as there are many outdated curricular materials being used in classrooms that may further contribute to these difficulties.

#### 1.3 Additional guidance on teaching various alphabets, characters, and/or symbols is recommended for teachers of LDWRs, as educators may have different experiences and opinions related to this component of instruction.

The group emphasized a need for more guidance on how to teach a new writing system, as participants agreed that teacher education programs do not specifically or sufficiently prepare instructors of LDWRs to teach alphabets, characters, and/or symbols in the world language classroom. Although participants generally appreciated the strategies provided in this section of the literature review, they argued that teachers may require additional supports to effectively implement them in the classroom because current instructional approaches may not reflect the recommendations presented. The group mentioned how research findings that caution against teaching writing systems in isolation as well as against using L1 strategies to support students who are learning a new writing system may be relatively new concepts to teachers of LDWRs, and some may feel the need to alter their entire approach to literacy instruction based on these statements. Given the potential changes to educators’ teaching practices, participants requested more guidance on what should be done in lieu of the above-mentioned approaches to the teaching of alphabets, characters, and/or symbols. One participant also raised concerns about suggesting that educators delay character introduction until after Pinyin is learned, and it was recommended that framework materials include various perspectives on this issue.

#### 1.4 To be more inclusive of this population, framework materials should acknowledge the challenges involved in finding authentic texts, materials, and resources that are appropriate for the teaching and learning of LDWRs.

When discussing reading and writing, participants expressed difficulties finding authentic texts with appropriate levels for their students learning LDWRs, especially for lower-proficiency students who are in higher grade levels where there is often a mismatch between students’ interests and the proficiency levels required to interact with texts related to those interests. The group discussed how the language complexity and sophistication seen in authentic texts is not appropriate for most of their students, and resources from major publishers or companies do not often meet the needs of their classrooms or programs. Participants also mentioned that authentic children’s books from countries in which Arabic is spoken may not be appropriate for students learning Arabic in different countries (e.g., Arabic books contain formal, vowelized texts and do not teach various dialects/varieties which are a common component of Arabic instruction in the U.S. and other countries). Given these difficulties, the group suggested that additional recommendations be provided to further support educators of LDWRs in teaching reading and writing, including the use of (1) video-based resources and graphic novels to support students during independent reading; (2) guided reading, collaborative reading, and choral reading to support students’ comprehension and understanding of texts; and (3) books containing infographics, graphic organizers, and/or visual supports.

#### 1.5 Although LDWRs are increasingly taught across schools and districts, programmatic issues and policies may limit the effectiveness and sustainability of these types of world language classes.

Participants agreed that more programmatic, structural, and financial support is needed for teachers of LDWRs, and the group emphasized how teacher-designed curricula are primarily used in this context due to the limited amount of resources, materials, and tools available for the teaching and learning of these languages. One participant mentioned that LDWR programs often share budgets with other commonly taught language programs within their school, leading to greater issues in getting the resources, training, and supports needed for effective instruction and assessment. It was reported that in this type of situation, LDWR programs will only be able to have the funding they need if other language programs agree to receive less funding, which can be particularly challenging and ultimately lead to an inequitable distribution of funds. The group highlighted how authentic materials and resources for LDWR programs must often be shipped from countries where the target language is spoken, and the costs involved in this process are yet another consideration that must be made when discussing programmatic policies and supports. To better support teachers of LDWRs, participants requested cost-effective ways for sharing instructional strategies and resources, including participation in working groups and/or professional learning communities with teachers of the same or similar languages.

### Implications and Recommendations

Based on the discussion from the LDWRs focus group, we have identified the following issues and topics to address in the LDWRs QRG: (1) acknowledging how various topics, materials, and instructional practices vary in appropriateness for different languages and contexts; (2) strategies for teaching alphabets, characters, and/or symbols; and (3) recommendations for teaching reading and writing using authentic texts and resources. We recommend that DESE further explore the educator needs described in this section for future resources and professional development activities related to supporting teachers of languages with diverse written representations.

## 2. Classical Language Group

### Focus Group Profile

Five educators participated in the focus group on how information gathered from the literature review should be used to inform the development of the classical languages QRG. Three participants reported teaching at the high school level, one participant reported teaching at the middle school level, and one participant reported teaching in both middle and high schools. While all participants reported teaching Latin, one teacher reported working with both Latin and Greek. Participants had experience working with classical languages in a variety of contexts, including traditional world language programs, Advanced Placement (AP) programs, and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs.

### Summary

In this focus group session, participants were asked to react to the following topics covered in the literature review: (1) effective instructional practices; (2) teaching Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities; and (3) assessment practices. The group extensively discussed the research findings, and although participants agreed with much of the information presented, they critiqued some of the conclusions drawn from the research and pointed out some additional considerations for future resource development. In the discussion, participants consistently highlighted the importance of reading in the teaching and learning of classical languages, and the group provided some suggestions of new text types that may be useful resources for standards- and proficiency-based classrooms. The following section highlights key findings from the group.

### Key Takeaways

#### 2.1 Classroom practices are often shaped by expected outcomes associated with various programs, policies, and standardized tests.

When discussing effective practices for instruction and assessment, participants reported that the requirements associated with different programs, policies, and standardized tests significantly shape classroom practices. The group noted that the Seal of Biliteracy (SOBL) emphasizes interpretive reading over other communicative modes, leading educators to increasingly focus on this skill to support students in achieving this award. Participants also stated that some programs (e.g., International Baccalaureate (IB) programs) are more compatible with a comprehensible input-based approach to classical language teaching and learning than others (e.g., Advanced Placement (AP) programs). In addition, programmatic differences in learning objectives and expected outcomes often influence the types of texts used in classical language classrooms. One participant reported that dual-enrollment programs, in which students are enrolled in programs that partner with colleges or universities, may study Latin texts from later periods such as the Renaissance. Given the complexities involved in determining how to approach instruction, participants requested guidance regarding the amount of emphasis that should be placed on different language domains, especially as these relate to assessments. Participants recommended that framework materials recognize the ways that different terminal goals shape classroom practices, as well as how to align classroom practices with these goals.

#### 2.2 As best practices for classical language teaching and learning are changing and evolving, framework materials must be meaningful and accessible to educators using a variety of instructional approaches.

Participants reported that both the communicative/active approach and the reading-oriented traditional approach are represented in classical language programs throughout Massachusetts, and the group explained that many programs fall somewhere on a spectrum in which one or multiple aspects of these different approaches are included in the classroom. While most participants advocated for active approaches and their ability to promote student engagement while simultaneously bringing classical language education into closer alignment with modern languages, the group highlighted the difficulties of communicative language teaching at higher proficiency levels in the classical language context. Participants also argued that more data is needed about how well the communicative approach supports advanced students, as there is limited information available about the extent to which it is effective for this population of learners. Overall, the group appreciated that the literature review recognized that there are multiple approaches to classical language instruction, and they agreed that guidance should be actionable and relevant for educators using both traditional and communicative approaches in their classrooms. Participants advocated for flexible resources and framework materials that can be used or adapted by all programs, rather than a document that mandates one instructional approach for classical language teaching and learning.

#### 2.3 Given the overall focus on reading in classical language classrooms, it is important to emphasize ways of building reading comprehension even as other skills and communicative modes are discussed.

Regardless of instructional approach, participants agreed that the end goal of classical language education is for students to access, understand, and engage with authentic texts. The group mentioned that activities that develop speaking and listening skills are still seen as building up to reading ability when working with students at lower proficiency levels, and this connection should be made in framework materials to encourage educators to think about reading comprehension while addressing other skills and communicative modes. Participants discussed the importance of text selection in classical language teaching and learning, and new resources such as novellas were described as beneficial for promoting student engagement, addressing diversity in classroom materials, and discussing social justice issues while building students’ proficiency in reading for accessing authentic texts. Participants agreed that practical examples are most helpful to teachers, and they advocated for the inclusion of such examples in framework materials to further emphasize the importance of reading. The group requested models of how to teach about novellas, poems, and artifacts accompanied by proficiency level progressions for each type of activity.

#### 2.4 Additional opportunities for collaboration, networking, and professional development are recommended for classical language teachers in order to enhance framework implementation.

The group noted that classical language teachers generally have professional networks across districts rather than within districts, and they agreed that educators would benefit from networking opportunities that connect Latin teachers across districts. In addition, participants advocated for professional development around actively using and speaking Latin. The group noted that this type of training would enhance teaching practices related to interpersonal communication and the Communities standard, as classical language teachers often create their own living Latin communities through a great deal of work outside the classroom. Participants noted that the lack of a native speaker community makes the Communities standard more difficult to incorporate into instruction, and the group expressed a desire for framework materials to acknowledge that community-related activities often happen in clubs or extracurricular settings outside of the classroom. They mentioned that professional networks can enable educators to share useful resources related to this and other world language standards, and opportunities to collaborate with other classical language teachers are recommended to enhance overall framework implementation. Participants also cited a number of professional organizations (the Classical Association of New England, the Classical Association of Massachusetts, and the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association (MaFLA)) that offer accessible, up-to-date workshops for educators, and local universities were mentioned as additional resources for teacher training.

#### 2.5 Although classical languages have connections with a number of disciplines, framework materials should emphasize the importance of drawing connections with history, culture, and self.

Participants praised the inclusion of the Comparisons and Connections standards in the literature review, particularly the “connections to self” component involving students’ exploration of their own perspectives and beliefs in relation to various topics discussed in the classroom. The group explained that for many students, connections to self are a reason to study classical languages, and these connections often serve as major takeaways from classical language courses and programs. In addition, participants emphasized how the study of classical languages allows students to understand the universality of human emotions (e.g., love and hate) across time, languages, and cultures in a way that they can still relate to in their daily lives. When discussing Social and Emotional Learning, one participant cautioned that it is necessary to address the violence present in many historical texts and bring a trauma-informed approach to discussions involving sensitive topics. Another participant noted that significant work has been done with classical texts to address concerns related to Social and Emotional Learning (e.g., the development of reading groups for the Iliad for veterans with PTSD, etc.), and educators should be aware of these different approaches and activities to enhance their own teaching practice.

### Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings from the classical languages focus group, we have identified the following issues and topics to address in the classical languages QRG: (1) clarification regarding the relative emphasis on different communicative modes in instruction and assessment; (2) recognition of the work involved in community-based learning outside of the classroom; and (3) recommendations for text selection that facilitate the teaching of diversity, social justice, and culture. In addition, participants recommended revising the literature review by (1) acknowledging classical language teachers’ existing understanding and use of technology; (2) replacing references to “everyday” topics with “core or foundational” topics; and (3) including references to modern texts written in classical languages, which are becoming more commonly used. We recommend that DESE further explore the educator needs described in this section for future resources and professional development activities related to supporting teachers of classical languages.

## 3. American Sign Language Group

### Focus Group Profile

Two educators participated in the focus group on how information gathered from the literature review should be used to inform the development of the American Sign Language (ASL) QRG. Although both participants were present for the first round of focus groups, demographic information and participants’ teaching context(s) will not be reported here to maintain the confidentiality of responses. One interpreter attended the focus group and provided simultaneous interpretation of the discussion.

### Summary

In this focus group session, participants were asked to react to the following topics covered in the literature review: (1) ASL and aural modern languages; (2) teaching culture; (3) English in the ASL classroom; and (4) expected learning outcomes. Overall, the group responded positively to the literature review findings, and participants agreed that the findings reflected both their experience and the issues that were raised in the first round of focus groups regarding the importance of using appropriate terminology in the ASL context. In the discussion, participants primarily focused on strategies to support some of the recommendations in the literature review and explored how the findings relate to their own teaching practices. The group also commented on some topics and definitions that may require further emphasis in framework materials. In this report, “Deaf” is capitalized when describing cultures and communities to indicate the difference between the physical aspects of deafness and cultural affiliations. The following section highlights key findings from the group.

### Key Takeaways

#### 3.1 Given the differences between ASL and aural modern languages, there is a need for strategies that are less reliant on English to support hearing students learning ASL in world language classrooms.

Participants discussed the difficulties involved in teaching ASL to hearing students, and they highlighted the importance of separating ASL from English to reinforce how ASL is its own language rather than a signed version of English. As hearing students learning ASL may attempt to use word-for-word translation from English to ASL in the world language classroom, it is important for educators to emphasize ways in which words and concepts are expressed differently in ASL as compared to English and other spoken languages. The group agreed that it may be helpful to include instructional activities that do not rely so heavily on students’ knowledge of ASL vocabulary when first learning the language. Participants explained how classifiers are often used in ASL communication to convey information and using these types of signs can help novice students who do not yet know more sophisticated or complex vocabulary to comprehend a story. The group also recommended introducing students to ASL’s visual vernacular, which is a theatrical art form that allows ASL learners to tell stories and express themselves in a visual way that is less reliant on specific vocabulary knowledge. Participants agreed that spoken English should be limited in the ASL context, and they noted that additional strategies for avoiding spoken English in the classroom would be helpful, including best practices for using glossing, acting, and/or graphemes (written symbols that help transcribe ASL by representing a sign and its parameters).

#### 3.2. There is a need for greater recognition of diversity within the Deaf community, and framework materials should emphasize the importance of teaching about the history of ASL and different varieties of the language.

The group praised the literature review’s emphasis on diversity as an important consideration for the teaching and learning of ASL in world language classrooms. Participants described their own experiences using instructional materials that include representations of ASL by various racial, ethnic, and sexual minority groups, and they agreed that these materials have been positively received by students, leading to increased interest in and motivation for learning the language. As many Deaf stories and literature have historically come from a limited perspective that does not include minoritized groups, participants emphasized how educators should be encouraged to actively search for more inclusive classroom resources. The group also highlighted how diversity should be addressed when teaching about the history of ASL, and participants recommended that framework materials underscore the importance of teaching about varied influences on the language (e.g., Native American Sign Languages, French Sign Language, Martha’s Vineyard Sign Language, etc.) and its varieties (e.g., Black American Sign Language) over time.

#### 3.3 Social and Emotional Learning is viewed as an important component of ASL education, and an emphasis on expressing and understanding emotions is recommended for learners in world language contexts.

The group expressed a need for more guidance on how to address the social and emotional components of ASL education, especially those that have become more pronounced through virtual instruction. Participants reported that students sometimes feel anxious or self-conscious when using video-conferencing platforms that provide their classmates with a close-up view of their facial expressions, body movements, and gestures when signing. The group agreed that educators would benefit from strategies to encourage students to be more confident in using these expressive components that are culturally appropriate and carry meaning in ASL, and it may be helpful to teach students how to understand and support their classmates who feel uncomfortable when communicating in the language. Empathy, openness, and compassion are also important skills for students to develop when interacting with deaf and hard of hearing individuals, and educators should be encouraged to consider how Social and Emotional Learning impacts students’ overall perceptions of ASL as a form of communication and various issues impacting the Deaf community.

#### 3.4 Because videos, online materials, and digital tools are increasingly used in ASL classrooms and among members of the Deaf community, framework materials should explicitly recognize and promote the use of these resources for effective ASL instruction.

Throughout the discussion, the group emphasized the importance of recognizing the role of videos in ASL communication, and they recommended that the practice of using videos for ASL teaching and learning be further emphasized in framework materials. Participants argued that students and teachers should develop digital literacy skills, as multimedia materials, tools, and resources are increasingly used in ASL instruction to support efforts to limit the use of written English in the classroom. The group also discussed the practice of using QR codes linked to videos of ASL communication and suggested that educators consider posting QR codes with these types of links throughout the school or classroom next to messages written in English. Participants agreed that using QR codes and other technology can encourage students’ interest and engagement in ASL learning, and activities that involve students independently exploring the various QR code links are recommended.

#### 3.5 To support effective framework implementation, educators would benefit from further guidance on the specific topics and skills that should be taught in ASL classrooms.

Participants requested that framework materials include a list of topics and aspects of the language that should be taught to beginning learners in ASL programs. The group specifically mentioned the need for additional guidance surrounding when and how to introduce pronouns, classifiers, and the various components of effective composition in this context (i.e., the use of ASL in different genres, such as poetry, news reports, video essays, etc.). Participants also underscored the importance of introducing cultural products, including films, literature, art, theater, and performance, as these can promote students’ interest in learning the language while supporting their understanding of Deaf culture and communities. One participant suggested that framework materials could highlight the use of strategies and resources designed for young deaf and hard of hearing ASL learners, as they may be helpful and appropriate for older students who are beginning to learn ASL as a world language and need to learn a significant amount of vocabulary.

### Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings from the ASL focus group, we have identified the following issues and topics to address in the ASL QRG: (1) effectively incorporating digital resources into ASL instruction; (2) recommended strategies for disassociating ASL from English for hearing learners of the language; and (3) guidance for addressing the social and emotional components of ASL teaching and learning. We recommend that DESE further explore the information presented in this section when considering future resources and professional development activities related to supporting teachers of ASL.

## 4. Heritage Language Group

### Focus Group Profile

Four educators participated in the focus group on how information gathered from the literature review should be used to inform the development of the heritage language QRG. The group consisted of two teachers, one world language coordinator, and one world language district supervisor. One participant reported working in high school, one participant reported working in elementary school, and two participants reported working across all grade levels. Participants had experience working with heritage speakers in a variety of contexts, including traditional world language programs, immersion programs, and programs specifically designed for heritage language learning. One participant also mentioned working in a Portuguese for Spanish speakers program. While all participants reported working with Spanish as a heritage language, two participants had additional experience working with Italian as a heritage language.

### Summary

In this focus group session, participants were asked to react to the following topics covered in the literature review: (1) teaching Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities; (2) effective instructional approaches; and (3) supporting learner diversity. Overall, the group positively responded to the literature review findings, and participants reported that the findings mirror their own experiences working with heritage speakers/signers in world language classrooms. In the discussion, participants primarily focused on ways in which the literature review reflects current trends and challenges in heritage language teaching, and they expressed appreciation for the ways in which various issues were presented in the findings. The group also commented on some topics that may require further emphasis in framework materials. The following section highlights key findings from the group.

### Key Takeaways

#### 4.1 Culture, community, and identity play a significant role in this context, and a greater emphasis on these components of heritage language education is recommended.

The group highlighted the need for a greater focus on the Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities standards when working with heritage speakers/signers in proficiency-based world language classrooms. While participants agreed that the pedagogical frameworks mentioned in the literature review were useful for heritage educators when incorporating these standards into instruction, they particularly praised the inclusion of community-based service learning as an effective approach to heritage language teaching and learning. The group expressed a desire for more practical guidance on using this approach in the classroom, and a list of potential volunteer opportunities or organizations connected with heritage language communities were mentioned as helpful resources for teachers interested in service learning. Participants discussed the need for additional support and strategies for assessing the Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities standards, and the group recommended that teachers consider using portfolios to demonstrate student progress when engaging in community-based activities that address these standards. Throughout the discussion, the group also emphasized the importance and interconnected nature of culture, community, and identity for heritage speakers/signers and their social emotional development. Participants agreed that more guidance is needed to effectively incorporate these topics into proficiency-based instruction, and educators should be advised to avoid any linguistic, ethnic, or community stereotypes that may negatively affect the language learning experience of heritage speakers/signers.

#### 4.2 Educators working with heritage speakers/signers would benefit from participating in professional learning communities, as this type of collaboration and networking provides an opportunity to share instructional approaches, strategies, and resources.

As there are limited resources and training opportunities available for educators working with heritage speakers/signers, the group expressed a need for professional learning communities and/or working groups to better support heritage language teaching and learning. Participants emphasized the importance of sharing effective classroom practices, and additional opportunities to interact with other heritage educators are needed to facilitate this type of collaboration. The group specifically mentioned the need for rubrics, activities, and assessments that are appropriate for heritage speakers/signers, and working groups may provide an opportunity to develop and discuss these resources. During this part of the discussion, one participant mentioned a survey being developed by the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association (MaFLA) to gather feedback on where heritage language teachers and programs are located throughout the state in order to connect educators working with this population of learners. The group seemed very interested in this initiative, and it is recommended that further efforts be made to bring heritage educators together from various languages, program types, and communities.

#### 4.3 To best support this population of learners, educators must know how to leverage the unique knowledge, skills, and backgrounds that heritage speakers/signers bring to the classroom.

Throughout the discussion, the group emphasized the importance of recognizing and celebrating the diverse skills and strengths of heritage speakers/signers. Participants emphasized the need to encourage a positivity and an assets-based approach to learning when working with heritage speakers/signers, as this population of learners may feel discouraged, frustrated, or isolated, especially in mixed classrooms. Participants discussed the benefits of leveraging heritage speakers/signers’ existing knowledge and background, and they highlighted the importance of building on and encouraging the transfer of their literacy skills, including those acquired from languages other than English. While the group appreciated the recommendation of using the multiliteracies approach in heritage language contexts, they requested additional guidance on how to best apply this type of instruction in the classroom to allow students to express themselves in a variety of ways. Participants also recommended that teachers provide opportunities for students to feel connected to the heritage language and culture, and one participant specifically highlighted the need to focus on cultural attrition when working with generational speakers/signers in this context who may feel less connected to the cultural component of heritage language education. The variety of language, dialects, and registers that students bring to the classroom should also be recognized and appreciated, and teaching about these differences can be particularly helpful when addressing the Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities standards. In addition, participants discussed additional considerations for ensuring that the needs of heritage speakers/signers are being met, especially those of dually identified students who require special education services related to language learning.

#### 4.4 Given the learner diversity in heritage and mixed classrooms, an emphasis on individualizing, personalizing, and differentiating instruction and assessment is needed.

The group praised the literature review’s emphasis on the importance of differentiating instruction for heritage speakers/signers, and they agreed that educators must get to know their students’ backgrounds, interests, and abilities in order to best support them in the classroom. Participants discussed the benefits of using surveys to gather this type of information, which will ultimately allow teachers to more effectively meet students’ individual needs. The group requested additional resources to support differentiated and individualized instruction, including strategies and templates for personalizing lessons, activities, and assessments. In addition, participants highlighted the need for educators working in mixed classrooms to inform heritage speakers/signers that they may be evaluated according to different expectations than their second language learning peers. This way, students will not feel like they are being assessed unfairly, and they will understand why they may have different learning goals and objectives when compared to other classmates. Participants agreed on the importance of proficiency-based approaches for both heritage-specific classrooms and mixed classrooms with second language learners, and it was recommended that this be emphasized in framework materials when addressing issues and challenges surrounding learner diversity.

#### 4.5 Family engagement is an essential component of heritage language education, and framework materials should highlight its importance in this context.

When discussing additional considerations for framework materials, participants highlighted the importance of family engagement in the heritage language context. Workshops, handouts, and online communications with parents and family members were recommended to improve heritage speaker/signer interest and engagement in their language learning experience, and participants described the benefits of family involvement in encouraging students to embrace their heritage language and culture. The group mentioned a need to teach parents how to support language learning in the home, as well as how to limit the use of translation from the heritage language to English in family conversations, which may limit students’ exposure to and use of the heritage language outside of the classroom.

### Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings from the heritage focus group, we have identified the following issues and topics to address in the heritage language QRG: (1) effectively incorporating communities into heritage language learning; (2) recommended strategies for individualizing instruction and assessment; (3) the role of family engagement and communication; and (4) guidance for addressing the social and emotional components of heritage language education. We recommend that DESE further explore the educator needs described in this section for future resources and professional development activities related to supporting teachers of heritage speakers and signers.

## 5. Elementary Group

### Focus Group Profile

Five educators participated in the focus group on how information gathered from the literature review should be used to inform the development of the elementary QRG. The group consisted of four teachers and one world language coordinator. Two participants reporting working in lower elementary school classes (PreK-K and K-2) and three participants reported working across upper and lower grade levels (K-5, 1-5, and K-8). Four participants reported working in traditional world language programs (i.e., Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES)) and one participant reported working in a dual language immersion program. The group included two Spanish teachers (one of whom previously taught German), one Portuguese teacher, one Mandarin teacher, and one coordinator overseeing French, Spanish, and Mandarin programs.

### Summary

In this focus group session, participants were asked to react to the following topics covered in the literature review: (1) effective instructional approaches; (2) teaching reading and writing; (3) expected language outcomes; and (4) characteristics of successful programs. Overall, the group positively responded to the literature review findings, and participants reported that the findings mirror their own experiences working in elementary world language classrooms. In the discussion, participants primarily focused on how strategies and recommendations should be framed in the elementary QRG, and they expressed agreement with the information presented in the findings. The group also commented on some topics that may require further emphasis in framework materials. The following section highlights key findings from the group.

### Key Takeaways

#### 5.1 As classroom engagement is essential for teaching and learning in elementary contexts, framework materials should emphasize the importance of getting students actively involved in using the target language.

When discussing effective instructional approaches, the group was quick to point out the need for a greater emphasis on active engagement in elementary world language contexts, a critical consideration when working with young learners. Participants argued that engagement should go beyond piquing students’ interests by encouraging them to explore with the language in various ways through hands-on collaborative learning activities. The group agreed that the classroom practices mentioned in the literature review (e.g., involving students in movement, rhymes, acting, etc.) accurately represent current trends in elementary world language teaching and learning, and one participant underscored the importance of making cross-curriculum connections with other core subjects to further encourage students’ participation in and dedication to language learning. The group also discussed the use of spiraling curriculum (i.e., a curriculum in which the same topics or themes are covered each year with increasing complexity), as this type of programming builds on students’ background knowledge while simultaneously promoting a deeper exploration of the target language. Although spiraling is a common instructional approach in this context, it is not always understood by students, parents, and various stakeholders. Educators may need to explain the benefits of this practice to ensure continued interest and engagement while repeating, reinforcing, and expanding on previously learned concepts in elementary world language classrooms.

#### 5.2 Expected language outcomes must be defined for this context to help various stakeholders understand the goals of elementary world language programs.

Participants expressed a desire for expected language outcomes based on the number of instructional hours involved, the degree of difficulty associated with various languages, and the different standards, skills, and communicative modes taught in the classroom. The group noted that while research findings related to program exit proficiency levels are not very helpful, educators would benefit from end-of-year benchmarks when planning for instruction and assessment. Concrete examples of interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational communication at different proficiency and grade levels were also requested to further support educators in understanding what students should be able to do with the language. The group noted that defined language outcomes will provide various stakeholders (i.e., teachers, parents, administrators, etc.) with a shared understanding of program goals and objectives, and this type of guidance can serve as a powerful tool for advocacy when establishing, maintaining, and growing elementary world language programs.

#### 5.3 Literacy development is viewed as an important component of elementary world language education, and educators would benefit from concrete examples of activities that support pre-literate students in acquiring reading and writing skills.

Although the group reported that different program models may place more or less emphasis on reading and writing, they agreed that these skills play a role in all elementary world language classrooms and that strategies to support young learners’ literacy development should be provided in framework materials. In addition to the recommendations included in the literature review, participants described various classroom practices that can be helpful when working with pre-literate students, including read alouds of repetitive stories, opportunities to build meaning through action and physical movement, and shared group activities for both reading and writing. One participant also expressed a desire for strategies addressing the difficulties of learning a new writing system, as elementary learners of languages with diverse written representations (LDWRs) may need to build early reading and writing skills through drawing, building shapes with clay, and/or the use of manipulatives. The group noted that educators would benefit from a detailed path or roadmap of pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading activities that can be applied to various sources and text types, and examples of this type of instruction are needed for effective framework implementation in the elementary context.

#### 5.4 The importance of effective family engagement practices should be highlighted in framework materials, as these practices play a major role in developing and maintaining successful elementary world language programs.

Participants underscored the importance of parent communication when working with young learners in this context, and the group agreed that it would be helpful to include recommendations related to family engagement practices for elementary world language teachers in framework materials and resources. Participants described the benefits of proactively providing information through family engagement so that parents/guardians better understand the content, objectives, and expected outcomes of different elementary world language programs. A disconnect between parent/guardian expectations and actual classroom practices may lead to concerns about program rigor and effectiveness, and educators should receive additional guidance on how to address misunderstandings while building strong family partnerships to improve world language teaching and learning.

#### 5.5 To best support framework implementation, additional opportunities for collaboration, networking, and professional development are recommended for elementary world language teachers.

Throughout the discussion, the group expressed a need for more training and support for elementary world language teachers, including guidance on making connections with other world language teachers and classroom teachers of different subjects. Participants mentioned the difficulties involved in establishing collaborative relationships with educators across disciplines, and they recommended that framework materials address this issue while providing support for new teachers in understanding how to successfully connect with the larger school community. One participant raised concerns about administrators’ limited involvement in curriculum development, adaptation, and/or selection, and mentioned the need for external professional learning communities to support this process where teachers do not receive the support they need within their school or department. The group agreed that educators would benefit from professional learning communities and various networking opportunities, as well targeted training to help unpack framework materials, including instructional tools and resources.

### Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings from the elementary focus group, we have identified the following issues and topics to address in the elementary QRG: (1) strategies for encouraging active engagement, involvement, and exploration in early language learning (2) guidance for effective reading and writing instruction for pre-literate students and (3) recommendations for communicating program goals and objectives to various stakeholders. We recommend that DESE further explore the educator needs described in this section for future resources and professional development activities related to supporting teachers of elementary world language learners.

## 6. Students with Disabilities Group

### Focus Group Profile

Four educators participated in the focus group on how information gathered from the literature review should be used to inform the development of the students with disabilities (SWDs) QRG. The focus group consisted of four participants: one special education teacher, one world language curriculum coordinator, one program director, and one world language department chair. All participants reported working with students with disabilities as special education teachers and/or world language teachers at the middle or high school level. While all participants reported working with Spanish, one participant additionally reported working with Latin and French. This participant also attended the classical languages focus group.

### Summary

In this focus group session, participants were asked to react to the following topics covered in the literature review: (1) disabilities and world language learning; and (2) accommodations for students with disabilities in world language classrooms. Overall, the group praised the literature review and appreciated the many accommodations described in the findings. In the discussion, participants highlighted a few additional accommodations and recommended ways to present the research that may further encourage educators to effectively use accommodations in their classrooms. The following section highlights key findings from the group.

### Key Takeaways

#### 6.1 World language education is for all types of learners, and framework materials should support educators’ understanding of how accommodations can be used to increase the accessibility of world language classrooms.

The group underscored the importance of including students with disabilities in world language education. Participants advocated for the use of accommodations to make language learning accessible, and they praised the many accommodations listed in the literature review. The group recommended that framework materials include a reminder that students with disabilities may be and should be in any class or level, and all world language educators should be prepared to provide appropriate supports and accommodations for this population of learners. To most effectively support educators in these efforts, participants suggested that framework materials include user-friendly charts of what accommodations could be implemented when working with students who have a particular disability or challenge in the world language classroom. They stated that content-specific guidance about accommodations would be particularly helpful, as educators may be unsure of how to apply general strategies included in District Curriculum Accommodation Plans (DCAPs) to the world language context.

#### 6.2 While particular disabilities may be associated with specific challenges, it is important to make accommodations based on students’ individual needs.

Participants appreciated the suggested accommodations from the literature, but they cautioned against tying an accommodation too closely to a particular diagnosis or disability. Instead, they argued that teachers should accommodate students’ individual needs, rather than simply using strategies that are generally recommended for certain disabilities. The group noted that even within a given diagnosis, there is not a one-size-fits all approach when providing accommodations, and framework materials should reflect this by using language indicating that students with particular disabilities *may* benefit from certain accommodations. Participants suggested framing the accommodations with reference to different challenges or difficulties rather than specific diagnoses. They also suggested including information about what issues students with varied types of disabilities may encounter when learning a new language, including guidance for what difficulty with working memory or attention might look like in the world language classroom.

#### 6.3 Although accommodations may be particularly helpful for students with disabilities, framework materials should highlight how all students, regardless of disability status, can benefit from accommodations in world language classrooms.

Participants discussed how students with a disability and low-proficiency students who do not have a diagnosed disability may encounter similar challenges and difficulties in language learning. The group agreed that the use of accommodations can benefit all students, whether or not they have a disability, and they underscored the importance of using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to make information more accessible for all types of learners in the classroom. Participants also noted that research about best instructional practices for different disabilities is in flux, and while various recommendations can change over time, framework materials should highlight practices that can be helpful whether or not they support a specific disability. For example, the group discussed how research is mixed on whether color coding is helpful for students with dyslexia, but it can still be a useful memory aid for many students in the classroom and should therefore be mentioned among the strategies presented. One participant presented the example that while alternative furniture may not help every student with ADHD, it can be a helpful accommodation for students with other disabilities or stresses in the world language context.

#### 6.4 Teaching practices that support social and emotional wellbeing must be considered when working with students with disabilities, and framework materials should include strategies to effectively address SEL-related issues for this population of learners.

Participants agreed that various instructional strategies, practices, and accommodations related to Social and Emotional Learning can be beneficial for students with disabilities in world language classrooms. The group highlighted the importance of incorporating small group instruction, providing additional think time, and using alternative assessments, especially for students who experience difficulty when engaging in speaking activities. Participants noted that social and emotional challenges may prevent students from demonstrating what they can do with the language, and one participant noted that while some students may actually be highly proficient in the language, emotional impairments or executive functioning issues can affect their work habits and overall performance. Another participant stated that students with disabilities benefit from proficiency-based assessments because they can establish goals for themselves and take control of their own learning, which teaches SEL skills related to self-confidence and learner autonomy. The group agreed that standards- and proficiency-based assessments benefit this population of learners, as this approach to assessment encourages students to focus on what they can do rather than what they can’t do with the language. Participants also discussed ways to incorporate Social and Emotional Learning into different lessons, and they recommended (1) using activities that address metacognitive skills; (2) building in time for stretching and movement; (3) explicitly discussing how students feel during class; (4) using whole-body activities; and (5) encouraging pair and group work to promote coalition-building in the classroom.

#### 6.5 There is a need for greater recognition of the programmatic policies and practices that affect the accessibility and effectiveness of world language education for students with disabilities.

Participants reiterated comments provided in the first round of focus groups related to world language education waivers and argued that the practice of providing waivers to students with disabilities is not supported by evidence. Participants also noted that waivers are sometimes provided based on scheduling or staffing considerations rather than students’ academic needs, and they discussed how the use of waivers in elementary or middle school often causes students with disabilities to be behind when enrolling in world language classes at the high school level. The group recommended that framework materials include research addressing how all types of learners can succeed in world language classes to encourage policies and practices that include students with disabilities. Participants also advocated for programmatic support in facilitating smaller class sizes or groupings and accessing special education liaisons, both of which are recommended when working with this population of learners in world language classrooms.

### Implications and Recommendations

Based on the discussion from the SWDs focus group, we have identified the following issues and topics to address in the SWDs QRG: (1) recognition that world language education is for all types of learners; (2) information about the challenges that might be seen when working with students with disabilities in world language classrooms; and (3) recommendations for accommodations that may support all students, including students with various disabilities. We recommend that DESE further explore the information presented in this section when considering future resources and professional development activities related to supporting teachers of students with disabilities.

# Recommendations

While focal area-specific implications and recommendations are highlighted in the findings section of this report, we identified several global issues across all focus groups related to teaching world languages in less common courses and programs. The following CAL recommendations are based on overall findings from the focus group sessions.

## Recognize multiple approaches to instruction and assessment

To best meet the needs of all world language educators, we recommend that DESE frame specific recommendations for instruction and assessment as potential approaches rather than one-size-fits-all solutions to teaching world languages in less common courses and programs. It is important to recognize and value different pedagogical preferences, as effective classroom practices may not look exactly like those described in the research. Recommendations should therefore be presented as one of many potentially effective approaches given that some may be more appropriate than others when working with different languages, programs, and types of learners.

## Develop practical resources to support effective framework implementation

We recommend that DESE consider developing practical framework implementation resources, including examples of classroom activities, instructional topics, learning supports, rubrics, and assessment tools that are applicable to a variety of grade levels, teaching contexts, and student populations. Lesson and unit planning guides are also recommended, and these resources should reflect the different types of world language program models offered in the state. Resources related to the Culture, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities standards are particularly important for less common courses and programs, and focal area-specific guidance is needed to effectively address these standards in this context. Educators would also benefit from defined expected student outcomes for different programs and types of learners based on the number of instructional hours involved, the degree of difficulty associated with various languages, and the different standards, skills, and communicative modes taught in the classroom.

## Consider providing opportunities for collaboration, networking, and training

To support educators working in less common courses and programs, we recommend that DESE consider providing additional opportunities for collaboration, networking, and training. Professional learning communities may be particularly helpful for connecting educators across districts and providing a space to share strategies, tools, and resources for effective instruction and assessment. Educators would also benefit from professional development offerings on a variety of topics related to collaboration and community, including (1) connecting with teachers of the same or similar languages. (2) establishing collaborative relationships with educators across disciplines; and (3) integrating world languages into the larger school community. Training should be provided for teachers, coordinators, and administrators to support a shared understanding of effective collaborative practices involving world language courses and programs.

# Appendix A: Participant Contact Information

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Last** | **First** | **Email** |
| Alvarado | Tanya | tanya\_alvarado@psbma.org |
| Antonellis | Nancy | antonellis2016@gmail.com |
| Carbone | Jasmine | jcarbone@ipsk12.net |
| Chen | Xi | x.chen@hwschools.net |
| Cowett | Michael | mcowett@duxbury.k12.ma.us |
| Gilbert | Kelly | kgilbert@nrpsk12.org |
| Kasanov | Kimberlee | kasanovk@weston.org |
| Kelley | Liz | eakelley36@gmail.com |
| Kelley | Christine | ckelley2@bostonpublicschools.org |
| Kozlovskaya | Valeriya | lera123@verizon.net |
| Machnik | Lisa | lmachnik@k12.somerville.ma.us |
| Mahoney | Danja | danja.mahoney@reading.k12.ma.us |
| Manzi | Erin | erin.manzi@wpsk12.org |
| Noronha | Fabiane | fnoronha@cpsd.us |
| Osborne (Cohen) | Adria | adriacohen45@gmail.com |
| Peters | Sara | speters@monomoy.edu |
| Quackenbush | Katherine | kquackenbush@bostonpublicschools.org |
| Simmons | Mary | msimmons@bostonpublicschools.org |
| Soto | Karen | ksotolegal@gmail.com |
| Thomas | Adriana | athomas@salemk12.org |
| Vellman | Arlene | arlenevelleman@walthampublicschools.org |
| Volpe | Iolanda | ivolpe@concordcarlisle.org |

# Appendix B: Focus Group Protocol

Note: The language in this protocol was used by facilitators as a guide but was not read verbatim.

## Introductions

* Introduce CAL Facilitator and CAL Notetaker
* Overview of CAL’s mission
* Participant introductions (Name, role, location)

## Overview

The Center of Applied Linguistics (CAL) was contracted by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to: (1) facilitate two rounds of focus groups with content advisors from six focus areas; (2) conduct a literature review of best practices in eight focus areas; and (3) develop Quick Reference Guides to support standards use in eight focus areas. The purpose of this study is to provide accessible and comprehensible guides for educators of less common courses and programs to effectively implement the forthcoming Massachusetts World Languages Framework. Feedback gathered from the focus group sessions will inform the development of these guides, and we thank you for supporting these efforts to improve world language education for ALL learners!

## Background

The framework was developed in response to CAL’s recommendations to update the 1999 Massachusetts World Languages Framework. It provides the vision, guiding principles, and standards for the state-wide implementation of world language education, and it is based upon and inclusive of the 2015 American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) World-Readiness Standards. Reorganized in alignment with other Massachusetts frameworks by grouping standards into three domains and ten practices, it is enhanced with a focus on social/emotional well-being and social justice and will be supplemented by appendices, QRGs, PD opportunities, and various other supporting documents.

## Procedures and Guidelines

Before we begin, we would like to set some ground rules to ensure that you all have a positive experience participating in this discussion. Please remember that there are no wrong answers. We expect to hear a variety of points of view, and we are interested in hearing from all of you. We want to make sure all of you have a chance to share your ideas and that everyone feels heard! We ask that you keep your audio and video turned on for the duration of today’s meeting, and there is also a chat box available if you would like to ask additional questions outside of our discussion.

While we will collect your name as part of the process, your personal information will be kept confidential and secure. Your personal information will never be associated with your individual responses. Your demographic information and responses will be reported in aggregate across all focus groups and will never be attributed using personally identifiable information. Data from the study will be stored on a password-protected computer on a secure network, and there are no anticipated risks for participating in this project.

## Discussion

Today, we will be discussing the major topic areas presented in the literature review. We ask that you think about how the literature review findings should be used to inform the development of supplementary resources for educators working with this population, including the \_\_\_ QRG.

**Note:** The questions in this protocol were provided to guide discussions but not all questions were asked directly in each group depending on the time and flow of the discussion.

### Discussion: Major Topic Areas from Literature Review

* What stands out to you among these findings?
* How do these findings compare with your experiences working with \_\_ in Massachusetts?
* What additional considerations related to this topic area are important for \_\_ teaching and learning?

### Discussion: Focal Area QRG

* Based on the first round of focus group findings AND the literature review findings, what would you like to see covered in the two-page \_\_ QRG?
  + What topics should be covered?
  + What type of information should be provided?
  + What terminology should be defined?

### Discussion: Additional QRGs

* In addition to the six focal area QRGs, we will be developing a Social and Emotional Learning QRG and an Assessment QRG
  + Through the lens of your role as an \_\_\_ educator, what would you like to see covered in these QRGs?

## Summary

* Brief overview of responses
* Themes and major takeaways
* Additional comments

## Conclusion

* Next steps for the project
* Thank you!

## Contact Information

Project Director: Francesca Di Silvio (fdisilvio@cal.org)

Project Manager: Jamie Morgan (jmorgan@cal.org)

Research Assistants: Leslie Fink (lfink@cal.org) and Mathilda Reckford (mreckford@cal.org)

# Appendix C: Focus Group Procedures

## Facilitators

The day before the scheduled session, facilitators will send all participants: (1) a reminder of their scheduled focus group time; and (2) a Zoom meeting link and guidance for joining the meeting. Before the focus group session, facilitators will make sure that all materials are ready, and technology is functioning properly. Facilitators will also enter the Zoom meeting 10-15 minutes prior to the start of the session to monitor the waiting room and welcome participants as they arrive. During the focus group session, facilitators will lead the focus group using the focus group PPT guide (via screenshare) and any additional area-specific questions that emerge from the discussion. Facilitators will identify and make note of major themes throughout the discussion, as these will be summarized at the end of the session. Facilitators will also make sure that the discussion is moving at an appropriate pace and that all participants have an opportunity to share their thoughts. Immediately following the focus group session, the facilitator will debrief with the notetaker to synthesize notes and themes from the discussion.

## Notetakers

The day before the scheduled session, notetakers will confirm that all participants’ consent forms are completed and saved in the project folder. Notetakers will also make a copy of the notetaking and synthesis templates for their assigned session. Before the focus group session, notetakers will make sure that all materials are ready and technology is functioning properly. Notetakers will also enter the Zoom meeting 10-15 minutes prior to the start of the session to mark down participants’ attendance as they arrive. During the focus group session, notetakers will take detailed notes capturing all comments, reactions, and feedback from the group. All notes will be taken electronically and saved in the notetaking document, and participant names will be included when capturing comments and quotations during the session. Immediately following the focus group session, notetakers will debrief with the facilitator to synthesize notes and themes from the discussion. Once this step is complete, notetakers will de-identify the notes, replace all participant names with ID numbers, and remove any other information that could identify participants, including program names and location information.

Immediately following each session, the facilitator and notetaker will meet to review notes, synthesize key findings, and document their impressions of the session.