

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

Feedback on Rhode Island's *Blueprint for
Multilingual Learner Success* and *Strategic
Plan for MLL Success*

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Introduction

Researchers from the Regional Education Laboratory Northeast & Islands conducted a review and synthesis of feedback collected by the Rhode Island Department of Education about Rhode Island’s Blueprint for Multilingual Learner (MLL) Success and Rhode Island’s Strategic Plan for MLL Success. Feedback reviewed consisted of focus group notes, emailed comments, Jamboard comments, and survey data. Stakeholder groups that provided feedback included community members, educators, parents, students, MLL directors, and the MLL Advisory Council. This document summarizes the themes that surfaced from the analysis of stakeholder feedback. Select quotes taken from the larger sample are included to illustrate each theme.

Accountability and Sustainability

Some feedback focused on accountability and sustainability, with questions about who will be responsible for monitoring the progress of this work and the potential consequences for not meeting stated goals. Suggestions included a low-stakes evaluation for teachers, district accountability with resource allocation, and ensuring that administrators are as equally accountable as classroom educators for realizing the goals of the Blueprint and Strategic Plan for MLL Success.

- “Who will be accountable for the rollout and execution of this work (program evaluation)?” (educator)
- “How are typically powerless directors in districts across the state supposed to lead this work in districts?” (MLL directors)
- “I am wondering how regulations are enforced. When student service times are not met, what happens?” (Multilingual learner/English language learner [MLL/ELL] Advisory Council)
- “I think it's a strong direction for the state to move in regarding MLLs, and all stakeholders would agree with the ideas put forth. Implementation, especially in push-in and content area classrooms, however, will still be a challenge.” (community member)

- “Teachers are powerless without the support of administration and this document seems to put a lot of emphasis on teacher accountability and not so much on district/administrative accountability. Will there be consequences for administrative choices that don't consider what is best for MLLs?” (MLL/ELL Advisory Council)

Culture and Environment

Many stakeholders shared feedback relating to areas of school culture and environment such as the diversity of school and district personnel, social-emotional learning, asset-based perspectives, creating a welcoming environment for families and students, and incorporating culturally responsive instruction or activities. Specific suggestions included ensuring that school personnel reflect ethnic and linguistic diversity, honoring and celebrating all student languages and assets, and meeting students’ emotional and mental health needs.

- “MLLs need people that wear their shoes and have very deep understanding of their struggles. They need assurance, they need confidence, they need sense of belonging, they need acceptance for them to succeed.” (community member)
- “In school the predominate language of instruction or communication is English so I think that can sometimes cause friction.” (student)
- “Are there any programs that seek to increase teachers that look like our children?” (community member)
- “How will districts create an atmosphere that will change the deficit perspective of MLLs to an asset-based perspective?” (MLL directors)
- “A lot about instruction..., which is great, but again, nothing about the social/emotional health of our students and families.” (MLL/ELL Advisory Council)

Including Educators and Students from All Districts

Stakeholders often emphasized that this work needs to involve all stakeholders, especially administrators and personnel from both low-incidence and high-incidence districts in Rhode Island. Specific comments highlighted how all stakeholders need to be involved in ways where they receive support and have opportunities to collaborate.

- “Leaders need to have the knowledge. Our SPED teachers, principals, support staff—everyone. There needs to be time to collaborate; many teachers don’t/won’t stay after school.” (educator)
- “New programs have been included to better the MLL programs, but they need to be expanded to all Rhode Island. MLLs are everywhere in RI, not just Providence.” (parent)

- “In order to do more collaboration, more administrative support is needed. Collaboration needs to be seen as a priority.” (educator)
- “It is essential that administrators in both schools and district positions (superintendent, assistant superintendent, special ed director, curriculum director, etc.) be included in MLL trainings, and that they attend. Trainings are organized and offered to teachers; but administrators seldom attend.” (MLL/ELL Advisory Council)
- “Strong focus on how ALL educators will support MLLs; however, in low incidence districts, will district administrators be told by RIDE how important it is that ALL district teachers become aware of the Blueprint?” (MLL directors)

Instruction and Curriculum (Quality and Supports)

The theme of quality instruction and curriculum accompanied by supports to implement effectively, was consistently mentioned. Feedback mostly focused on clarifications around the high-quality instructional framework, MLL supports, monitoring of curriculum and instruction across districts, and reliable assessments for MLLs. Suggestions included having English learner specialists push in to classrooms, providing educator coaching, making curriculum more relevant to students, and incorporating all content areas in this work.

- “My sister’s been a MLL, and the education that I got and she got was very different. It was less demanding for her... The education given to her didn’t take into consideration her strengths. It didn’t give her all that she could do; it just gave her the minimum... For me it was the complete opposite.” (student)
- “At my old school, the [MLL] students would just be pulled out of class.” (student)
- “...interpreters in the schools should come into the classroom to help students in early stages of English language development” (community member)
- “I’m struggling with why this is not aligned with the Comprehensive Literacy Grants. Districts are adopting programs that have ED Reports green ratings, but clearly don’t meet the needs of entering and emerging level readers, especially at the higher (grade) levels.” (MLL/ELL Advisory Council)
- “Since our state is so small would it make sense for all of the districts to use the same curriculum? Many of our scholars move often; this would allow for consistency.” (MLL directors)
- “Please also include content areas outside of the core curriculum—CTE teachers, and itinerant teachers are all eager to partake in this work and play a critical role as well!” (MLL/ELL Advisory Council)
- “Is there any way to focus on other MLL subjects that students may be more interested and engaged in?” (parent)

Professional Development

Feedback surrounding professional development fell into key sub-themes of building educator capacity, streamlining professional development, and ensuring that professional learning (PL) is high quality and consistent throughout the state. Suggestions included involving all stakeholders in professional development (educators, administrators, parents), developing professional learning communities (PLCs), developing a teacher training pathway that taps into and supports the local community, and offering professional development at the state level.

- “Effective PL all has to do with the approach; start with ‘how can I help you?’ and don’t make it about eyes in the classroom; there should be feet in the classroom.” (community member)
- “What do you need from central office? Building Admin. [and] Principals need training in the needs of MLLs.” (educator)
- “Professional learning should not include filling out paperwork; there needs to be collaborative professional learning communities with banks of resources for teachers of MLLs to draw from.” (educator)
- “Can we develop a training pathway for students that graduate with the Seal of Bilingualism to become RI’s future teachers?” (MLL/ELL Advisory Council)
- “Need training for all teachers to support MLLs...more certification cohorts and PD starting at the state level for coherence.” (MLL directors)

Resources

Many stakeholders had specific comments about how to avoid limited resources impacting implementation of certain aspects of the Blueprint and Strategic Plan. The most commonly addressed resources were time, funding, and personnel.

- “I’m wondering if districts will have the financial capacity and the personnel to bring this about.” (MLL/ELL Advisory Council)
- “How do we create systems in schools where people don’t have time to have these meaningful conversations? Newer and veteran teachers working together to benefit their students.” (educator)
- “Is there any incentives that we can provide to our teachers to retain them and prevent teacher absenteeism”? (community member)
- “A very big shift for low incidence districts. There are so many pulls on time. It is hard to get others on board. It has to come from higher administration—the importance of these students.” (educator)
- “We need more educators period.” (MLL/ELL Advisory Council)

Family and Community Engagement

Stakeholders provided many comments and suggestions about ways to more deeply engage families and community members in their schools and student lives. Suggestions included parent workshops, clear and consistent opportunities for communication, flexibility, communication and materials in more languages, a state hub or center for family resources, and culturally responsive family and community events.

- “Use more social media to deliver information. Parent workshops about how to set up Skyward need to be available after the fact and not just at the workshop.” (parent)
- “Have we considered getting community health workers in the schools to support school staff?” (community member)
- “There needs to be education for parents about what school is so they can present themselves well in that environment; we need to make sure parents have the right perception, as there are socio-historical processes at play.” (community member)
- “I want school to provide consistent communication, resources, and suggestions of what parents can do at home to support their students.” (parent)
- “Have the flexibility for parents to choose the times and dates. Give parents information with enough notice so that they be prepared to contribute and attend.” (parent)
- “I know translating into 100 languages is not realistic, but I wonder how many more people would be included if we chose the top ten languages instead. How many more families would that include?” (MLL/ELL Advisory Council)

Data

Stakeholders also shared feedback regarding data use, tools, and privacy considerations. Suggestions included an emphasis on making data-driven decisions, sharing data across districts and schools, ensuring student confidentiality, and developing a data analysis tool or rubric to track progress.

- “How will we ensure that student confidentiality will be maintained?” (MLL/ELL Advisory Council)
- “A tool to collect data would be outstanding.” (MLL/ELL Advisory Council)
- “If there is any way to see diplomatically that the data cannot be manipulated to suit politics and leaders...that would be great.” (MLL/ELL Advisory Council)
- “Will there be multiple forms of data collection?” (MLL/ELL Advisory Council)