



## Considerations for Multilingual Learners

Teams should use the following considerations to ensure that PLPs are implemented effectively for multilingual learners (MLLs) in order to ensure literacy growth.

### **Professional Knowledge:**

PLP teams should include educators with expertise in instruction and assessment of MLLs. Misidentification/over identification is reduced when a team has knowledge of second language acquisition, English language development and the Tier 1/Core curriculum. Members of the team should have knowledge of the student's educational history, cultural influences on learning, language development and any relevant learning challenges. The team should ensure families are engaged in the PLP development and implementation process as well. Families provide valuable insight into their child's educational history, cultural norms and strengths and needs.

### **Tier 1 Instruction:**

LEAs must ensure MLLs have access to Tier 1 instruction that includes embedded supports aligned with the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) standards based on their English language proficiency levels. Therefore, MLLs should not be removed from Tier 1 instruction in order to receive intervention or ELD instruction.

### **Tier 2 and 3 Intervention:**

Interventions must be culturally and linguistically responsive, align with the student's specific instructional needs, and consistently address both foundational literacy skills and language development. Note, some Tier 2 and 3 materials do not provide language support, which impacts students' rate of progress. Therefore, educators who provide interventions should have knowledge of second language acquisition and the role of language proficiency in literacy growth in order to provide simultaneous language and literacy supports.

### **Assessment:**

When possible, teams should first administer language assessments in the student's first language to provide context on the student's ability to cross-linguistically transfer their knowledge of the first language to their acquisition of the second language. If a student's first language shares a similar alphabetic system to the second language and they have skills in phonological and phonemic awareness, they will be more likely to achieve reading success in the second language. For example, studies have found that letter naming, decoding, and oral reading fluency in Spanish are accurate predictors of reading success in both Spanish and English.



If a student has difficulty in their first language, this may impact their ability to develop literacy skills in their second language. However, if a student has literacy skills in their first language but struggles with literacy in their second language, the discrepancy might be related to limited exposure to research-based instruction or an indication of a literacy-based difficulty.

When reflecting on MLLs literacy and language skills, one-point-in-time assessments may not accurately reflect their skills and knowledge. A body of evidence must be compiled in order to understand their language and literacy strengths and needs as well as establish instructional goals.

- **Universal Screening:**

Screening MLLs with valid and reliable measures in both their first and second language helps identify students who need immediate intervention in order to reduce the overrepresentation of multilingual students in special education. Screening is especially critical in kindergarten through grade two, where the widespread belief is that reading-based deficits are due to a lack of English language proficiency instead of a potential disability.

Studies have consistently shown a correlation between measures of phonological awareness, alphabetic knowledge, and oral reading fluency with measures of reading comprehension for MLLs in kindergarten through fifth grade. Therefore, screeners that address these skills are recommended for identifying MLLs who may be at risk for reading failure.

When reviewing screening results, the team must consider the following guiding questions:

Area	Consider:
<b>Phonological Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the student’s first language break down words or sounds in this way? (e.g., does the language have compound words?)</li> <li>• Is the skill relative in the student’s first language? (e.g., rhyming, alliteration, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Phonemic Awareness/ Letter-sound Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the student acquired these phonemes in their spoken English?</li> <li>• What sounds does the student know in each language?</li> <li>• Are there sounds in English that are infrequent or nonexistent in the student’s first language?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Refer to the <a href="#">American Speech-Language Hearing Association’s Phonemic Inventories</a> for information on phonemic systems across languages</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



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**Rapid Automatized  
Naming**

- Do these objects/symbols have a specific name in the student's first language?
  - Is the student familiar with these objects/symbols?
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- **Progress Monitoring:**

Prior to progress monitoring, teams should establish instructional goals for both literacy and language. These goals should be rigorous and align with grade-level literacy and ELD standards. When conducting progress monitoring for MLLs, it is important to consider the language of instruction. For students who receive instruction in multiple languages, it is recommended that progress is monitored in the languages of instruction.

- The National Center on Intensive Intervention [Academic Progress Monitoring Tools Chart](#) provides data on use with MLLs when available.

MLLs' performance on these assessments should be assessed in relation to *true peers*, students who have the same or similar levels of language proficiency. This requires that teams have knowledge of students' educational history, cultural influences on learning, and language development. If a student's data suggests that they are not responding in alignment with their *true peers*, then the team must consider whether the intervention has been delivered with fidelity and at an appropriate dosage and consider next steps to intensify instruction.

- The National Center on Intensive Intervention's [Dimensions of Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity and Considerations for English Learners](#) provides teams with a tool to use to evaluate an intervention's intensity.