

Back to School RI: Multilingual Learner/English Learner Guidance SY20-21

August, 2020



RIDE Rhode Island
Department
of Education

Vision

All multilingual learners (MLLs) in Rhode Island have access to high-quality instructional opportunities that facilitate continuity of learning, leverage their cultural and linguistic assets, and promote the student agency necessary for MLLs to thrive.

Specific Considerations

- LEAs bear continued [civil rights obligations](#) regarding the provision of English language services during the COVID-19 outbreak. Schools must work to ensure language barriers do not limit access to instruction for MLLs.
- The purpose of this guidance is to outline best practices for the 2020-2021 school year (“Reopening”). Implementation will vary based on LEA needs. Links are intended to serve as resources and assist with planning.
- RIDE has issued [guidance](#) regarding provisional MLL identification and placement due to COVID-19. Provisional determinations do not replace formal identification procedures but should allow MLLs to participate meaningfully in the LEA’s educational program.
- Successful language instruction educational programs (LIEPs) set high expectations for both language services and content instruction. General education teachers share responsibility for the instruction of MLLs with teachers certified in English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)/Bilingual Dual Language (BDL).
- High-quality instruction for MLLs requires joint effort from educators and school leaders, as well as rich family engagement. Equitable systems create the conditions for effective teaching and learning, particularly in the current context.
- Robust opportunities for language use—especially oral language use—are paramount, and educators must collaborate to integrate reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills into content instruction and assessment.



Best Practices for School Leaders

Communications & Family Engagement

Before School Reopens

- Recruit MLL families to serve on your school's Reopening committee and/or assemble an MLL parent group to vet school-wide communications for clarity and effectiveness. Design all communication with the cultural and linguistic diversity of your school community in mind.
- Establish a school team responsible for coordinating and monitoring [outreach to MLL families](#), and put the necessary structures in place to sustain this coordination throughout the year. Include family liaisons, school counselors, social workers, and representatives from each grade level. Consider rotating grade-level membership if participation places too much demand on staff.

Once School Reopens

- Survey MLL families to determine [preferred modes of communication](#) (text messages, phone calls, emails, video chats, printed notes, etc.) and preferred languages of oral/written communication, as well as hours of availability and access to technology. Make survey data easily accessible to school leaders and teachers. Be mindful of work schedules and other obligations.
- Create a system for logging communications between school staff and MLL families, and conduct regular communications audits. Be sure that communication logs include notes about the interaction and what was stated.

Equitable School Systems for MLLs

Before School Reopens

- Set a schedule that allots regular common planning time to ESOL/BDL and content educators, so all teachers of record can share ownership in promoting language development and monitoring the progress of MLLs. Consider flexible scheduling, and allow for [collaboration](#) to occur virtually as needed.
- Embed training into orientation about digital tools (e.g., translating and interpreting apps, closed captioning, text-to-speech browser extensions) that may help educators leverage students' home languages in remote instruction and communicate more effectively with families (although no substitute for professional interpretation and translation services).



Once School Reopens

- Pick one of the [Best Practices for Educators](#) as a focus area each month, and offer professional learning on that practice to both ESOL/BDL and content teachers. Facilitate video-based [instructional rounds](#) or informal [coaching sessions](#) that converge on this *look-for*. Establish norms for giving and receiving feedback (e.g., emerging practices such as a *grow* and a *glow*).
- Give teachers opportunities to hone their leadership skills and share effective classroom strategies for MLLs with colleagues by devoting a portion of school meetings to peer-led demos. Consider extending the invitation virtually to teachers at other schools, and develop a staff resource library by recording these micro lessons.

Data & Continuous Improvement

Before School Reopens

- Determine which data points the LEA will track (attendance, work completion, technology access, language development progress, etc.) to monitor the quality of continued learning opportunities for MLLs.
- Analyze MLL distance learning data from 2019-2020 to better understand successes and areas for improvement. Be sure that Reopening plans give MLLs who experienced the most COVID-related learning loss opportunities to receive in-person services.
- Examine enrollment data for 2020-2021 and provisional MLL identification placements to ensure that in-person schedules prioritize young MLLs most in need of [structured early literacy instruction](#).

Once School Reopens

- Conduct targeted outreach to MLLs who are rising seniors about outstanding credits required for graduation, and ensure MLLs at the secondary level receive counseling and academic supports needed to transition to equitable postsecondary paths.
- Evaluate plans for Reopening by asking MLL families what is working well and what the school can do better. Consider using survey tools or the [National Parent Teacher Association focus group toolkit](#) (translated in six languages) to determine whether MLL families are receiving the supports they need.
- Review MLL data related to participation in daily instruction. Create a progress monitoring system for [attendance](#) and work completion, so school staff have ample time to respond to data before the term is over.



Structural Practices for MLLs to Thrive

<i>Principles for MLL Success</i>	<i>Before School Reopens</i>	<i>Once School Reopens</i>
A Student-Centered System	Assemble a school team to coordinate and monitor outreach to MLL families.	Create a system for logging parent communication, and conduct communication audits.
A Coherent System	Set a calendar that outlines common planning time so ESOL/BDL and general education teachers can collaborate.	Cultivate leadership by allowing teachers to ‘demo’ effective classroom strategies for MLLs at staff meetings.
An Asset-Oriented System	Embed training into orientation about how staff can leverage digital tools to incorporate students’ home languages into instruction.	Administer surveys to MLL families and analyze data to determine how the school can better support MLL families.
A Research- & Data-Informed System	Prioritize ELSWD, SIFE, and young MLLs for in-person instruction. Counsel rising seniors about outstanding credits required for graduation.	Review MLL data and respond to systems for monitoring MLL attendance, work completion, and daily participation.
A High-Quality Instructional System	Establish non-negotiables for MLL instruction from the list of Best Practices for Educators . Select focus areas each month.	Engage in virtual instructional rounds with teachers. Align feedback from informal observations to specific MLL focus areas.

Best Practices for Educators

Rigorous Instruction & Academic Discourse

Before School Reopens

- Take inventory of students on your roster who are MLLs using your School Information System. Make note of students’ home languages, and analyze their ACCESS data by language domain, identifying strengths and areas for growth. Determine which students met their annual English language proficiency growth targets, and plan targeted supports for those who did not meet their targets.
- Determine whether instructional materials in [math](#) and [ELA](#) offer appropriate supports for MLLs with [RIDE’s curriculum review tools](#). Use flexible pacing when working with your curriculum’s scope & sequence, pursuant to RIDE’s guidance on unfinished learning in [ELA](#), [math](#), [science](#), and [social studies](#).

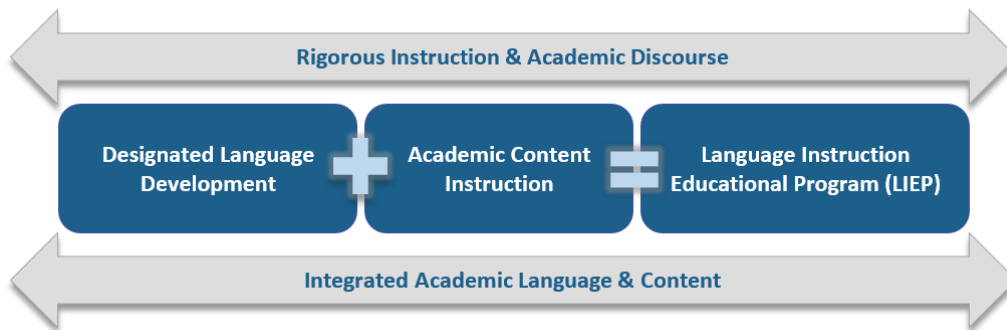
Once School Reopens

- Prioritize depth of learning, and structure tasks around open-ended questions that generate sustained, student-driven inquiry. Emphasize quality over quantity rather than



busy work and tight deadlines. In the interest of promoting high-quality work, closely monitor progress and allow MLLs to work at their own pace when appropriate.

- Incorporate scaffolds that allow MLLs to access and show mastery of grade-level material. Use the [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\) framework](#), and in each lesson, provide multiple means of engagement, representation, and action & expression.



Integrated Academic Language & Content

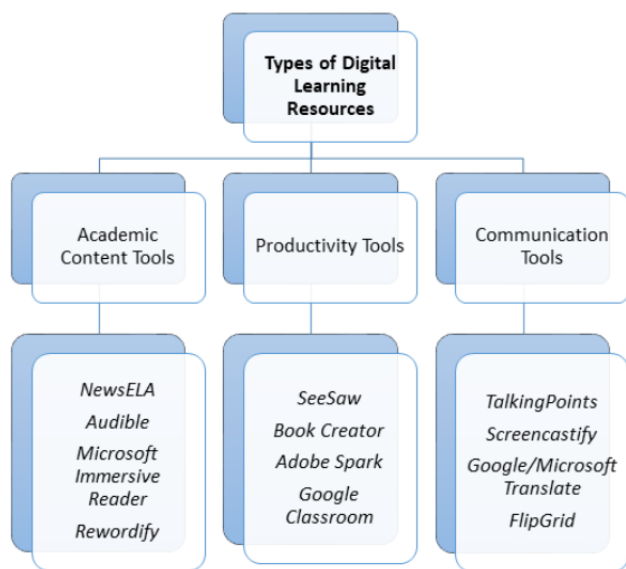
Before School Reopens

- Incorporate reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills into plans for every lesson, especially in core classes. Focus on the language skills that will help students complete the disciplinary task, and take advantage of [lesson plan templates](#) with explicit sections for identifying language objectives.
- Anchor language instruction in disciplinary learning and the [WIDA English Language Development Standards](#). Display key terms from the lesson on handouts, slide decks, or whiteboards, and incorporate instructional materials from academic classes into your English language teaching so learners have ample context for language use.

Once School Reopens

- Collaborate across content and certification areas, and meet with the other teachers that have your MLL(s) to discuss progress and co-plan language objectives. Work together to identify the language features that will best facilitate content mastery in [Math](#) and [ELA](#), and ensure special educators have opportunities to share [insights](#) about effective instruction and the progress of MLLs that are Differently Able.
- Provide feedback to MLLs in multiple modalities, and make the process interactive so you can check for understanding and promote further language use. If teaching remotely, discuss strengths and growth areas with students on instant-messenger, or call students after providing written feedback. Be sure that MLLs know what their content and language goals are.





Support Features	Break-Down of Supports
Visual	Visual definition
	Interactive visual features
	Closed captioning
Auditory	Auditory definition
	Text-to-speech for text selection
	Text-to-speech for highlighted word
	Record and replay voice
Translation	Spoken word translation
	Printed word translation
	Spoken text translation
	Printed translation
Collaboration	Document sharing
	Collaboration based on proficiency level

Note: The classification system for digital tools and embedded support features outlined above is drawn from a U.S. Department of Education [report](#) on supporting English learners with technology. Mentions of specific programs or products are not endorsements from RIDE; examples are intended to enhance understanding about how educators and administrators can use technology to support MLLs.

Efficient Use of Instructional Time throughout Reopening

Before School Reopens

- Plan to model and explicitly teach students how they should interact with others on digital learning platforms. Familiarize students with comment/chat features and mute/unmute buttons, and set clear, culturally responsive expectations on how students should demonstrate engagement.
- Establish routines. Design lessons with a familiar progression, and select [digital tools](#) and [collaborative learning structures](#) that can be used repeatedly. For example, activate background knowledge asynchronously before live-streaming class, or have students reflect on their learning through audio recordings after exit tickets. Consider giving plans for the entire week at once so students and families can anticipate due dates.
- Be cognizant of the added stress and/or trauma COVID-19 has placed on multilingual communities, particularly unaccompanied minors and immigrant and refugee families. Plan to incorporate [Social & Emotional Learning](#) into daily instruction.

Once School Reopens

- Make the most of in-person and synchronous learning by prioritizing student language use and reducing teacher talk. Build school community, and create space for MLLs to interact with peers in English and their home languages. Give MLLs opportunities to write down their thoughts before asking them to speak publicly.



- Be intentional with your use of technology (e.g., limiting the number of students on a single call), and make efforts to balance digital asynchronous and synchronous learning with non-digital remote learning. For example, embed small-group synchronous digital check-in's into non-digital remote lessons as an added layer of support for MLLs.
- Conduct regular [formative assessments](#) to better understand COVID-related learning loss and monitor MLL progress throughout Reopening. Give MLLs options for how they will demonstrate knowledge and skills, as this UDL strategy is particularly crucial in digital learning environments.

Instructional Practices for MLLs to Thrive

Tenets for High-Quality MLL Instruction	Before School Reopens	Once School Reopens
Asset-Based Stance	Determine who your MLLs are, what their home languages are, and what their strengths are based on 2020 ACCESS data.	Make the most of in-person and synchronous learning time by prioritizing student voices and language use.
Rigorous Instruction & Academic Discourse	Plan to model and explicitly teach students how to interact on digital platforms, and review instructional materials for appropriateness.	Incorporate scaffolds that make linguistic input, output, and processes for engaging in learning more accessible to MLLs.
Integrated Academic Language & Content Instruction	Incorporate reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills into every lesson plan, and identify language goals for MLLs.	Collaborate regularly with your MLLs' other teachers of record, and discuss their progress as well as which language skills might best promote content mastery.
Ongoing Assessment for Learning	Evaluate language learning by conducting formative assessments aligned to language objectives.	Give feedback to MLLs often and in multiple modalities. Make the process interactive.

