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Advocating for Multilingual Learners

Competency

The educator approaches multilingual education from a perspective of advocacy and understands the needs of multilingual learners.

Key Method

The educator will understand who multilingual learners are and the importance of advocating for their needs. They will learn the key areas of advocacy and demonstrate use of strategies to support advocacy efforts.

Method Components

Multilingual Learners and Why Advocate for Them

Multilingual learners, sometimes referred to as English Language Learners, are students who come from diverse linguistic backgrounds and are learning English as well as their native language. These students and their families bring a wealth of cultural experiences to the school, enriching the educational environment. There may be various categories of multilingual learners in your classroom, for example:

- Students born in the United States
- Newcomers to the United States
- Heritage Language Learners

Mental Health of Multilingual Learners



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Multilingual Learners

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Multilingual learners may face various mental health challenges of which educators should be aware.

- Language Dominance and Identity
 - They may feel pressure to fit in, thus losing their identity
 - Identity confusion, which may lead to feelings of isolation
 - Learners may feel stressed by their family situation and worried about permanency
- Translanguaging and Cognitive Load
 - Translanguaging, previously known as code-switching, can create cognitive load and mental strain
 - Mental fatigue can occur, especially when being precise in language usage is necessary
- Language Discrimination and Stigma
 - Students may experience discrimination based on their language use
 - These actions may impact learners' self-esteem
- Communication Anxiety
 - Worry about making a mistake
 - Fear of facing negative judgments from others
- Social Isolation
 - Learners may feel excluded from conversations
- Academic Pressure
 - Academic pressure can contribute to stress when a student is learning a new language in addition to grade-level expectations
- Family and Cultural Expectations
 - There may be conflicts between family and cultural expectations related to language use
- Loss of Heritage Language
 - Multilingual learners may experience a sense of loss if they do not maintain their heritage or native language.
 - This can lead to disconnectedness from cultural roots
- Limited Mental Health Resources
 - There may be limited access to resources available to learners in their native languages
 - This can hinder their ability to seek help
- Acculturation Stress
 - Adapting to a new culture and language can lead to stress and anxiety or feelings of alienation
- Pressure to Conform
 - Multilingual learners may face pressure to conform, but their preference may differ from the dominant culture.

Origins or History of Multilingual Education



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The landscape of multilingual education has been created due to several legal cases. They have worked to shape policies and practices to ensure equitable access to resources, programs, and teaching and learning for multilingual learners. Understanding the history of multilingual education helps educators see models of prior experiences so that they can support learners and look for opportunities for advocacy.

- Keyes v. School District No. 1, Denver, Colorado
- Lau v. Nichols
- Castañeda v. Pickard
- Plyler v. Doe
- Dear Colleague Letter

Understanding Multilingual Learners and their Families

Multilingual learners bring a wealth of experiences to the classroom. To harness the power of this diversity, educators must understand their learners and collaborate with their families. You should explore the benefits of multilingualism and the different types of families who are multilingual.

Multilingualism as an Asset	Different Types of Multilingual Families
<p>Research has shown that multilingual individuals often possess enhanced cognitive skills, such as problem-solving, multitasking, and creative thinking.</p> <p>Their ability to communicate across languages also promotes cultural sensitivity and global awareness, attributes that are increasingly valuable in today's interconnected world. By recognizing and celebrating multilingualism, educators can encourage students to take pride in their linguistic heritage and leverage their diverse linguistic abilities to excel academically and socially.</p>	<p>There are different types of multilingual families, each is shaped, however, by unique cultural backgrounds, family dynamics, and societal influences.</p> <p>Intergenerational families may have grandparents who speak one language, parents who use another, and children who are exposed to yet another. Bilingual families might use two languages interchangeably at home, while mixed-language families navigate the complexities of blending languages from different origins.</p> <p>Understanding these diverse family dynamics is important for educators who aim to build meaningful relationships and create inclusive learning environments.</p>

Strategies for Engaging and Sustaining Work with Multilingual Families



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There are many strategies for working with multilingual families that have been found to be useful and effective. Educators should be equipped with many of these to reach the families of their students. Embracing multilingualism can leverage school family relationships to nurture the potential of every student. Using these strategies builds trust and encourages open communication.

Activities of advocacy should be grounded in the following:

Cultural Sensitivity and Respect: Educators should approach multilingual families with cultural sensitivity and respect, valuing the richness of their diverse backgrounds and traditions.

Two-Way Communication: Clear and effective communication is vital. Providing translated materials and interpretation can bridge linguistic gaps.

Family Involvement Activities: organizing events to celebrate the cultures of diverse families creates opportunities for shared experiences. These can connect families and the school community.

Home-School Connection: Encourage families to maintain native languages at home. This can strengthen language development and preserve cultural identity.

Collaborative Goal Setting: Involve families in setting academic and language goals. Working together can create a holistic approach to learning that respects the family's aspirations and cultural values.

Equity Issues in Education with Multilingual Learners

Culture and culturally relevant pedagogy play an important role in equitable education for multilingual learners. Through learning about these issues, educators can better advocate for their students' educational experiences.

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy for multilingual learners can be described as deliberate action taken to work high-quality education and equitable educational opportunities. There are many different components to advocacy for multilingual learners including equitable access to content, equitable assessment opportunities, effective collaboration with families, and clear and transparent processes for identification, monitoring, and exiting of multilingual learners.

As multilingual learners and their families become more familiar with the U.S. educational system and learn to advocate for themselves, they will require fewer advocacy efforts from others to obtain equitable educational opportunities. Educators should practice this scaffolded advocacy strategy so their multilingual learners can become self-advocates.

Advocates work to influence policies, systems, and public opinion to create a more equitable



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and just society. Advocacy plays a crucial role in empowering marginalized communities, amplifying their concerns, and challenging existing norms to bring about transformation.

Educators as Advocates

Educators have a unique position to advocate for meaningful changes that positively impact students, schools, and communities. By leveraging their expertise, passion, and influence, educators can contribute to building a more equitable and inclusive educational landscape. You will ensure that multilingual learners in your school district are not only receiving all the services they are entitled to under the law, but have access to all programs in which every other student can participate. These are some ways you can become an effective advocate:

- Stay informed about educational policies and issues affecting your students
- Identify areas within your community that require advocacy
- Cultivate relationships with fellow educators, parents, students, and policy makers
- Share real-life experiences faced by your students to illustrate the need for change
- Join or engage with professional organizations related to education advocacy
- Use social media platforms to raise awareness
- Attend school board meetings, town halls etc. to express your concerns
- Contribute opinion pieces to publications
- Reach out to elected officials individually or with a group to advocate for your students
- Plan workshops to educate the community and stakeholders
- Involve students in advocacy efforts
- Offer your expertise in education to local organizations that align with your advocacy goals

Five Advocacy Steps:

These steps will empower you to begin your journey of change-making to create a more equitable educational system for multilingual learners.

1. **Isolate the issue**—Think about your own context and how you can be an agent of change. By identifying an issue, you will have the opportunity to propose a solution. You will need to have concrete steps and a clear and concise way to describe the advocacy issue.
2. **Gather information and evidence**—This step involves the systematic collection of data, research, anecdotes, and real-life stories that substantiate the need for change and underscore the significance of the advocated cause.
3. **Build a Coalition**—Bring together diverse individuals, groups, and organizations with shared interests and goals to collectively advocate for change. By uniting voices and resources, a coalition amplifies its impact and increases the likelihood of influencing policies, practices, and public opinion.
4. **Take action**—Plans are put into motion, and deliberate efforts are made to raise awareness, engage stakeholders, and create meaningful change. This phase involves a



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range of strategic activities aimed at mobilizing support, influencing decision-makers, and garnering public attention.

5. **Evaluate and reflect**—Evaluation and reflection are integral components of effective advocacy. In this step, you will assess the impact of your efforts, learn from your successes and challenges, and refine strategies for future endeavors. It is through evaluation and reflection that you will contribute to the growth and success of your cause while advancing positive change in the community and beyond.

When creating your own advocacy plan, educators should look for root causes and isolate the issue of focus. These are some resources you can use:

- Root Cause Analysis
- Fishbone diagrams
- S.W.O.T system (strength, weakness, opportunity, and threats)

When advocating for multilingual learners and their families, be mindful of their rights, data and other evidence to support your position, and policies in place.

The coalition or allies for your advocacy should include stakeholders in support of the change.

Supporting Rationale and Research

Blanco, Maria. “Before *Brown*, there was *Mendez*: The Lasting Impact of *Mendez v. Westminster* in the Struggle for Desegregation.” American Immigration Council. American Immigration Council, 25 March 2010,

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1isSM7_hqoz0MSfCIYF59GH0fIldnVFf0/view?usp=sharing

Wright, Wayne E. “Landmark Court Rulings Regarding English Language Learners.” Colorín Colorado. WETA Public Broadcasting, 2010,

<https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/landmark-court-rulings-regarding-english-language-learners>

Zacarian, Debbie. “Serving English Learners: Laws, Policies, and Regulations.” Colorín Colorado. WETA Public Broadcasting, 2012,

<https://www.colorincolorado.org/guide/serving-english-learners-laws-policies-and-regulations>



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Resources

Who are Multilingual Students?

[Strategies for Helping ELLs that were Born in the US - A World of Language Learners](#)

[Who's Teaching the Children Crossing the U.S. Border? Answers to 6 Questions](#)

[Newcomer Tool Kit \(PDF\)](#)

[Who is a heritage language learner?](#)

Mental Health and Multilingual Learners

[Mental health challenges impact ELL population - The Martha's Vineyard Times](#)

[SEL for English Language Learners: What Educators Need to Know | Colorín Colorado](#)

[How to Support the Social and Emotional Health of Middle/High School ELLs | Colorín Colorado](#)

[Helping immigrant children heal](#)

Origin of Multilingual Education

[History of ELL](#)

[Lau vs. Nichols: A Landmark Case for ELL Education](#)

[Castañeda v. Pickard: Are ELLs receiving the services they need?](#)

[Legal Protections for K-12 English Learner and Immigrant-Background Students](#)

Understanding Multilingual Learners and their Families

[The changing ELL field: Seeing language and culture as assets](#)

[Native Language Use and Support - Accessibility Strategy](#)



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[The Home Language: An English Language Learner's Most Valuable Resource](#)

[How to Support ELL Students with Interrupted Formal Education \(SIFEs\)](#)

[Learning English While Homeless: Fast Fluency Drives Academic Success \(Part 1\)](#)

[Communicating with ELL Families: 10 Strategies for Schools](#)

[Two Venezuelan families. Two immigration policies. Two different outcomes - Los Angeles Times](#)

[The Link Between Spanish Language and Culture](#)

Strategies to Engage and Sustain Work with Multilingual Learners and Their Families

[Five Ways to Engage Parents of ELL Students](#)

[Encouraging and Sustaining ELL Parent Engagement](#)

[Improving Achievement for English Learners: Conclusions from 2 Research Reviews](#)

[Pre-K and Latinos](#)

[ESL Support in Elementary School](#)

[Scenarios for Advocacy](#)

Resources for Submission:

[All In! How Educators Can Advocate for English Language Learners](#)

[5-Step Action Plan](#) (click on the link to make a copy of a sample action plan)

[Cause and Effect Analysis](#)

[Fishbone](#)

[SWOT Analysis](#)



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Submission Guidelines and Evaluation Criteria

To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3 and receive a proficient score for all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

400-600 words

Does your classroom, school, or district view multilingualism and multilingual families as an asset? Explain if you are reflecting on your classroom, school, or district. Give examples of how it is viewed as an asset, or if it is not currently viewed as an asset, what changes could be made?

How have you helped, or would you help multilingual learners and their families learn to advocate for themselves?

How have you collaborated, or would you collaborate with allies who shared your point of view on the policy issue? How have you collaborated, or how would you collaborate with potential allies who have a different point of view than you?

Passing: The educator completely answers each of the questions above using personal examples and supporting evidence that illustrates his or her prior experiences advocating for ELL-friendly policies and collaborating with allies. The writing is organized and easy to understand.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following four artifacts:

Artifact 1. Identify the Issue (approximately 2 pages)

1. Perform a root cause analysis to isolate the issue.
2. Define an issue affecting your multilingual students and their families. Think about how you can be an agent of change to advocate for and with your class/school/district community.
3. Using a visual mapping tool, break down the issue using a visual mapping tool. Three options are included below. Think about why this issue is occurring.



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- Brainstorm possible solutions that will make the school experience more equitable for multilingual learners and their families. Choose an idea that will have the highest impact on your overall goal.

Resources

- [Root Cause Analysis](#)
- [Fishbone](#)
- [SWOT](#)

Artifact 2. Five-Step Action Plan: Select a multilingual learner-friendly policy you want to advocate for at the local, state, and/or federal level. Write a five-step action plan (see the Resources section) reflecting the policy. Identify each step in your plan:

- Isolate the issue
- Gather information and evidence
- Build a coalition
- Take action
- Evaluate and reflect

Artifact 3. Agent of Change Action: Become an agent of change. Write a letter or schedule a meeting with a union representative, school board member, or a local, state, or federal legislator to educate them about policies affecting multilingual learners and how policies can become more multilingual learner-friendly. Create a document that includes:

- Your target audience and stakeholders
- Data that supports your cause
- Relevant rights or court cases that impact your cause
- Evidence for and counter to your cause

Artifact 4. Meeting Talking Points: Create talking points for your meeting. They can be a bulleted list in a document or presentation. Be sure to include how the policy you want to change is currently affecting your students and their families along with the policy changes for which you are advocating. The notes should include the voices of multilingual students and their families. It demonstrates your willingness to collaborate with them on advocacy efforts.

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Identify the Issue	Explicitly describes key insights discovered during the root cause analysis.	Explains the issue but does not give insights discovered during the root cause analysis Visual mapping tool is	The issue is presented but it is not clear how it was decided on during root cause analysis Visual mapping tool is



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	<p>Includes the visual mapping tool used</p> <p>Explains and includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how this is a relevant issue for your multilingual learner families -how this is an issue that is one that you can advocate for -includes a list of possible solutions 	<p>included but it does not align with the issue identified</p> <p>Explanation includes two of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -how this is a relevant issue for your multilingual learner families -how it is an issue for which you can advocate - a list of possible solutions 	<p>missing</p> <p>Explanation includes none or one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -how this is a relevant issue for your multilingual learner families -how this is an issue for which you can advocate - a list of possible solutions
<p>Artifact 2: Advocacy Action Plan</p>	<p>Explicitly describes each of the five steps to advocate for multilingual learners</p> <p>Connections to the content on pages 10-14 of the “ALL In!” guide are evident throughout the advocacy plan</p> <p>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure are correct and enhance clear communication</p> <p>100-200 words per step</p>	<p>Describes the five steps to advocate for multilingual learners, but does not provide adequate detail for each step</p> <p>Connections to the content on pages 10-14 of the “ALL In!” guide are evident throughout some of the advocacy plan</p> <p>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure are correct and allow for clear communication</p> <p>Is not 100-200 words per step</p>	<p>Describes the steps to advocate for multilingual learners, but details needed to provide a clear picture for the evaluator are missing.</p> <p>There are no connections to the content on pages 10-14 of the “ALL In!” guide in the advocacy plan</p> <p>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure may inhibit clear communication</p> <p>Is not 100-200 words per step</p>
<p>Artifact 3: Agent of Change Letter</p>	<p>A business style letter explicitly includes the following components:</p>	<p>A letter includes the following components but does not provide adequate detail concerning:</p>	<p>A letter provides little detail about or omits the following components:</p>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Who are your target stakeholders -Data supporting your cause -Relevant rights or court cases that impact your cause -Evidence for and counter to your cause <p>The issue for which you are advocating</p> <p>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure are correct and enhance clear communication.</p> <p>400-500 words</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Who are your target stakeholders -Data supporting your cause -Relevant rights or court cases that impact your cause -Evidence for and counter to your cause -The issue for which you are advocating <p>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure are correct and allow for clear communication</p> <p>Is not 400-500 words</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Who are your target stakeholders -Data supporting your cause -Relevant rights or court cases that impact your cause -Evidence for and counter to your cause -The issue for which you are advocating <p>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure may inhibit clear communication</p> <p>Is not 400-500 words</p>
<p>Artifact 4: Meeting talking Points</p>	<p>The talking points explicitly include all the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The policy you are advocating to change -How the current policy is affecting your multilingual learner families -How your proposal would support multilingual learning - Multilingual learner family voices are present in your points OR you explicitly explain how you are advocating alongside your families. <p>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure are</p>	<p>The talking points include 3-4 of the following components.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The policy you are advocating to change -How the current policy is affecting your multilingual learner families -How your proposal would support multilingual learning - Multilingual learner family voices are present in your points OR you explicitly explain how you are advocating alongside your families. <p>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure are</p>	<p>The talking points include 1-2 of the following components. Limited details are provided for the components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The policy you are advocating to change -How the current policy is affecting your multilingual learner families -How your proposal would support multilingual learning -Multilingual learner family voices are present in your points OR you explicitly explain how you are advocating alongside your families.



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	correct and enhance clear communication	present and allow for clear communication	Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure may inhibit clear communication
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Part 3. Reflection

500-600 words

Use the word count as a guide to write a personal reflection about your work on this micro-credential. For guidance on writing a good reflection, review this resource:

[How Do I Write a Good Personal Reflection?](#)

Provide a reflection on what you learned, using the following questions as guidance:

- What have you learned about being an advocate for multilingual learners through the creation of an advocacy plan and planning a meeting with a union representative, school board member, or legislator?
- What did you learn about working in partnership with multilingual learners and their families when advocating for multilingual learner-friendly policies?
- Moving forward, how might what you learned in this course influence your practice?

Passing: The educator’s response thoughtfully addresses the impact on their current practice, using personal examples and supporting evidence. The educator’s reflection is relevant to the micro-credentialing process. Writing is organized and easy to understand.



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