



Multilingual Learners: 101

Competency

The educator will apply their understanding of the multilingual learner experience to develop a successful plan for teaching them in their school.

Key Method

The educator will learn about multilingual learners, explore the legal aspects of educating them, the types of educational programs available, and create an environment that supports their education through equitable and effective actions.

Method Components

Exploring the World of Multilingual Learners

Multilingual learners, often referred to as English Language Learners (ELLs), are students from diverse linguistic backgrounds who are acquiring proficiency in English alongside their native languages. These students bring a wealth of cultural and linguistic experiences to the classroom.

As an educator, understanding the unique needs of multilingual learners is crucial. These students possess remarkable cognitive abilities and resilience. By implementing inclusive and culturally responsive teaching strategies, educators can create an environment that fosters the development of both language and academic skills, enabling multilingual learners to fully participate and excel in their educational journey. Understanding who your multilingual learners are is crucial to meeting their academic needs. There may be multilingual learners from a variety of backgrounds in your classroom, for example:

- Students born in the United States
- Newcomers to the United States
- Indigenous language speakers
- Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)
- Students who were born outside of the U.S., but are not newcomers

Collaboration for Multilingual Learner Education

Educators must examine their own beliefs about working with multilingual learners, reflect on how their culture has influenced them and their teaching, and work collaboratively with other educators to support their students' academic success.

Collaboration has been shown to support student learning and teacher practice. Collaboration supports student learning when the responsibility for multilingual learners is shared.

Collaboration includes practices such as:

- Co-teaching lessons to integrate language and content
- Determining assessment and accommodations
- Communicating with families
- Supporting social and emotional needs
- Developing rich, culturally relevant lessons

Understanding the Rights of Multilingual Learners

The laws and policies that govern the identification, placement, and education of multilingual learners is a framework that shapes an equitable and inclusive experience for students. These are legal mandates that impact multilingual learners' education:

- The Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
 - Mandates that educational institutions ensure access and prohibit discrimination based on linguistic background
- Individuals with Disabilities Act
 - Mandates appropriate services for ML students with disabilities
- The Bilingual Education Act (BEA) and Title III of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
 - Outlines funding and requirements for education programs to support multilingual learners

There are also landmark cases that have had a historical impact on multilingual learner education in the United States. It is essential that educators understand the history and laws affecting their learners. In the 1970s and early 1980s, landmark court cases and laws established equal rights for all students in the United States. The following cases are among them.

Keys vs. Denver

In 1973, *Keyes v. Denver School District Number 1* was the first *de facto* segregation case heard in the U.S. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Denver Public Schools was indeed segregated by race. It led the district to integrate its schools through busing. The decision marked one of the first times the nation's highest court identified segregation in northern schools and extended integration rights to Latino students, according to Chalkbeat.

A 2023 study by the University of Colorado, Boulder, showed that Denver Public Schools, the largest district in the state, remained solidly segregated by race and income, despite years of efforts to improve.

Lau vs. Nichols

In 1974, *Lau v. Nichols* argued that the local school district was not providing an adequate education to its English learners because ELs could not sufficiently comprehend English. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that school districts must take the steps needed to provide ELs with an instructional program in which they can be given equal access to an education.

Castañeda v. Pickard

In this 1978 case, which was filed against the Raymondville, Texas Independent School District, Mexican American children and their parents claimed that the district discriminated against them based on their ethnicity. The plaintiffs argued that classrooms were segregated using a grouping system based on racially and ethnically discriminatory criteria. School districts were required to establish bilingual education according to the 1974 *Lau v. Nichols* ruling, yet there was no way to evaluate the adequacy of the school's approach. Consequently, it often resulted in inadequate separation.

The judge ruled in favor of the defendant, stating that the district had not violated any of the plaintiff's constitutional or statutory rights. The ruling was appealed, and in 1981, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. The *Castañeda v. Pickard* case established three criteria for a program that serves LEP students. These measures determine whether a school district is serving LEP students and whether the program addresses their needs. The principles are as follows:

- It must be based on "a sound educational theory."
- It must be "implemented effectively," with adequate resources and personnel.
- After a trial period, it must be evaluated as effective in overcoming language handicaps.

Sources: Stanford University ([case summary](#)) and ([full text](#))

Identifying English Language Learners

Multilingual students are identified through a multi-pronged process that includes assessments. These are assessments used to help identify a student's language proficiency, academic needs, and services needed:

- Home Language Survey
 - This is the most common assessment tool
 - It will determine if language proficiency should be screened
- Screener
 - Determines if students qualify for English Language Development (ELD) services
 - Helps determine English Proficiency
 - Once screened, families may opt out of services
- Ongoing Monitoring and Assessments
 - States annually measure English Language Proficiency
 - Students can exit programs, but they are then monitored for two years

Programming for Multilingual Learners

There are multiple types of programs available to support multilingual learners within school settings. They all aim to provide English language development along with academic success. The programs provided vary according to a district's resources, philosophy, and goals. Here are some common types of programs available.

Programming Name	Descriptions
English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Development (ELD)	Students who are learning English as an additional language. The teacher who serves this population can push-in or pull-out for instruction.
Structured English Immersion (SEI)	English is taught with grade-level content standards regardless of the students' English proficiency.
Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) or Early-Exit Bilingual Education	Initial content and literacy instruction is taught in the students' home language and then shift into English.
Dual Language or Two-Way Immersion	There are two linguistic populations where students are taught literacy and academic content in both languages simultaneously.
One-Way Developmental Bilingual Education	There is one language population of students learning two languages simultaneously.

Federal and State Requirements

Requirements of multilingual programs vary by state. There are some common principles that apply to all programs.

- They must be educationally sound in theory and practice
- They must enable multilingual learners to attain both English proficiency and academic success
- They must allow multilingual learners to participate until the time that students can succeed without support
- They must support students with special education services as required
- Schools are required to provide a means to identify English learners

Equity, Culture, and Family Engagement

By cultivating an environment of equity, cultural sensitivity, and family engagement, educators can create a nurturing and empowering educational experience for multilingual learners. This approach not only facilitates language acquisition and academic achievement but also promotes a sense of identity, belonging, and pride in their cultural heritage.

Diversity reflects the varied backgrounds of your students, encompassing several dimensions.

- Linguistic diversity
- Cultural diversity
- Geographic diversity

- Socioeconomic diversity
- Refugee and immigrant backgrounds
- Family structure
- Strengths and talents

Educators should embrace the differences that students bring to the classroom community. Create a culturally responsive and supportive learning environment to support all students. It is important to apply a thoughtful, comprehensive approach that considers diverse needs. These are some things to consider:

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Understand and respect the cultural norms, values, and beliefs of the populations present and create a welcoming and inclusive environment that honors their identities.
- **Language Support:** Provide language support, bilingual materials, interpreters, and culturally relevant resources to facilitate communication and comprehension.
- **Trauma-Informed Practices:** Implement trauma-informed practices to create a safe and supportive learning environment that recognizes and responds to learners' emotional needs.
- **Prior Learning Assessment:** Conduct a thorough assessment to determine appropriate placement and support services.
- **Culturally Relevant Curriculum:** Develop a curriculum that reflects the diverse backgrounds and experiences of these populations.
- **Social and Emotional Support:** Offer counseling services, mentorship programs, and peer support to help students navigate social and emotional challenges.
- **Flexible Instructional Approaches:** Recognize that students may have different levels of literacy and numeracy in both their native language and in English. Use differentiated, flexible instructional approaches to accommodate diverse learning levels and abilities.
- **Parent and Family Engagement:** Engage parents and families in the educational process, recognizing their important role in supporting their children's academic success.

Become familiar with culturally responsive practices to make learning meaningful and appropriate for students.

Supporting Rationale and Research

August, D. (2013). "College and Career Ready English Language Learners: Challenges, Strengths, and Strategies." Colorado Ed Initiative, Paper presented at the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) Conference, Lake Buena Vista, FL., 2013, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oevtHvorqZREQEbpeU45Yr0SuPS_S9pu/view?usp=sharing

"Framework for English Language Proficiency Development Standards Corresponding to the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards." Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2012, Washington, DC: <https://www.ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/ELPD%20Framework%20Booklet-Final%20for%20web.pdf>

WIDA English Language Developments (ELD) Standards Frameworks <https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/WIDA-ELD-Standards-Framework-2020.pdf>

Ferlazzo, Larry. (2021). Thirteen Instructional Strategies for Supporting ELL Newcomers, [Thirteen Instructional Strategies for Supporting ELL Newcomers \(Opinion\) \(edweek.org\)](#)

Gross, E., & Crawford, J. (n.d.). Instructional Models for Equitable and Effective Multilingual Instruction in California. *CATESOL Journal*, 32(1), 59-67. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1322395>

Lafond, Susan. "Common Core and ELLs: Key Shifts in Language Arts and Literacy (Part II){blogpost}." WETA, 2012, <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/51433/>

"Key Principles for ELL Instruction." Stanford University, January 2013, https://ul.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/resource/2021-03/Key%20Principles%20for%20ELL%20Instruction%20with%20references_0.pdf

Zwiers, J., & Weiss, S. (2023). Integrated Language and Content Fundamentals. Understanding Language at Stanford. August 22, 2023. Resources produced by CSET/Understanding Language at Stanford University are available electronically at <https://ul.stanford.edu/resource/integrated-language-and-content-fundamentals>

Resources

Exploring the World of Multilingual Learners

[English Learner Tool Kit](#)

[English Learners in K-12 Education by State](#)

[Understanding Multilingual Learners](#)

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

[Learn about ELLs' home languages](#)

[Students with Interrupted Formal Education](#)

[Building Momentum With Long-Term English Learners](#)

[Supporting Dual Language Learners](#)

[The Impacts on English Learners of Key State High School Policies and Graduation Requirements](#)

[Working With Dually Classified Learners](#)

[Common Assumptions vs. the Evidence: English Language Learners in the United States](#)

[A Quick-Start Guide for Teaching English-Language Learners](#)

[A Guide to Finding and Understanding English Learner Data](#)

[What You Need To Know About ELLs: FAQs](#)

Understanding the Rights of Multilingual Learners

[Serving English Learners: Laws, Policies, and Regulations](#)

[Ensuring English Learner Students Can Participate Meaningfully and Equally in Educational Programs](#)

[Non-Regulatory Guidance: English Learners and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act \(ESEA\), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#)

[Chapter 8 Tools and Resources for Monitoring and Exiting English Learners From EL Programs and Services](#)

Videos

[ESL Support in Elementary School](#)

[Teaching ELL Students Using Sheltered Instruction](#)

[Transitional Bilingual Education](#)

[The Importance of a Dual Language Program](#)

[One-Way Bilingual Education](#)

Equity, Culture, and Family Engagement

[ELLs Belong to All of Us: The Role of ESOL Specialists in Collaboration](#)

[Intercultural Communication](#)

[Teaching Math in a Culturally Responsible Way](#)

[What is Culturally Responsive Teaching?](#)

[CHAPTER 5: Establishing Partnerships With Families](#)

[A Guide for Engaging ELL Families: Twenty Strategies for School Leaders](#)

[Getting Off to a Good Start: Positive interactions with diverse families](#)

[Information for Limited English Proficient \(LEP\) Parents and Guardians and for Schools and School Districts that Communicate with Them](#)

[Portrait of a Population: How English Language Learners are Putting Schools to the Test](#)

[Special Populations: English Language Learners](#)

[Instruction for Diverse Groups of English Language Learners](#)

Resources for Instruction

[Activate Games for Learning American English: Board Games](#)

[ESL/ELL Education: Interactive Websites for Learning](#)

[8 Strategies for Preschool ELLs' Language and Literacy Development](#)

[SLIFE: Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education](#)

[Covid Creates an Academic Gap for English Language Learners](#)

[Ways to Support Long-Term English-Language Learners \(Opinion\)](#)

[Not Every Student from Latin America Speaks Spanish: How Educators Can Recognize — and Meet the Needs of — Indigenous-Speaking Students – \(Opinion\) The 74](#)

[5 Key Steps to Welcome Newcomer Students](#)

[Working With Dually Classified Learners](#)

Submission Guidelines and Evaluation Criteria

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

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

300-400 words

Explain your role as it pertains to supporting the MLs in your setting.

1. Describe the demographics of your classroom such as grade level, content, and cultural and linguistic composition of your students.
2. In what ways do you collaborate with other educators to support ML student learning and achievement within your educational setting?

3. In your role, describe how you currently support multilingual student learning and achievement.

Passing: The educator completely answers each question using personal examples of how their role supports multilingual learners. Writing is organized and easy to understand.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

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

Artifact 1: Demographics and Programming Background

Reflect on your state's multilingual learner demographic data using [MPI's Interactive state ELL map](#). **Explain** how those demographics are represented in your school setting and what impact they have on classroom instruction. Describe the program used within your school and/or district. *The list of program types can be found in the Method Components section above.* Create a document that explains how it supports the multilingual learners you work with.

Artifact 2: Action Plan for Multilingual Learners

Create an action plan with at least 5 steps to increase your capacity to support ML students. Share your action plan with at least one person in your school. This could be an in-person meeting or a larger presentation. Include who you shared your plan with and the materials used.

Artifact 3: Lesson Plan

Write or modify an existing lesson plan to demonstrate support for your students. Address all the following needs in your lesson:

- Language levels or abilities of your students
- Content that will be included in the lesson
- Culturally relevant curriculum
- At least one of the considerations (below) is explicitly identified and explained in the lesson plan.
 - Collaboration
 - Language support
 - Prior learning assessment
 - Social and emotional support
 - Flexible instructional approaches
 - Parent and family engagement

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Description of your learners and program	<p>Thoroughly describes the multilingual learner demographics of students in your state, district, or school.</p> <p>Thoughtfully reflect on how the demographics impact your classroom or school instruction.</p> <p>Explains the instructional program used within your school and how this program supports the language acquisition of your students</p>	<p>Describe the demographics of your state and district, but do not share information specific to your role.</p> <p>Does not reflect on how the demographics impact your classroom or school instruction</p> <p>Describes the instructional program in your classroom or school, but does not clearly explain how the program supports language learners</p>	<p>Briefly describe the demographics of one of the categories (state, district, or school)</p> <p>No reflection on how demographics impact classroom or school instruction</p> <p>Describes the instructional program in your classroom or school, but does not reflect on how it impacts student learning</p>
Artifact 2: Action Plan	<p>The action plan includes at least 5 steps that will provide a pathway forward for multilingual learners in your classroom and school.</p> <p>Explain with whom you have shared the plan and their role within your school.</p> <p>Includes the material used for your presentation. This may be a one-pager or a presentation outlining your plan.</p>	<p>The action plan includes fewer than five steps that provide a pathway forward for multilingual learners in your classroom and school.</p> <p>The action plan may or may not include the person or group with whom it was shared.</p> <p>The material used in the presentation is incomplete or does not match the action plan.</p>	<p>The action plan includes fewer than 3 steps or is unclear.</p> <p>The action plan is not shared with a colleague or group.</p> <p>The presentation material is missing.</p>
Artifact 3: Lesson Plan	<p>The lesson plan includes all the following:</p>	<p>The lesson plan includes 3-4 of the following:</p>	<p>The lesson plan includes 1-2 of the following:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -grade and content -lesson objective -language abilities of the learners in your class -how the lesson will support multilingual learners -how your lesson is culturally responsive <p>Identify which consideration from the list you are including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Collaboration -Language support -Prior Learning Assessment -Social and emotional support -Flexible instructional approaches -Parent and family engagement <p>Explain how the consideration from the list above is included in the lesson.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -grade and content -lesson objective -language abilities of the learners in your class -how the lesson will support multilingual learners -how your lesson is culturally responsive <p>Identify which consideration from the list you are including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Collaboration -Language support -Prior Learning Assessment -Social and emotional support -Flexible instructional approaches -Parent and family engagement <p>Does not explicitly explain how the consideration from the above list is included in the lesson.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -grade and content -lesson objective -language abilities of the learners in your class -how the lesson will support multilingual learners -how your lesson is culturally responsive <p>Does not identify which consideration from the list you are including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Collaboration -Language support -Prior Learning Assessment -Social and emotional support -Flexible instructional approaches -Parent and family engagement <p>Does not explicitly explain how the consideration from the above list is included in the lesson.</p>
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Part 3. Reflection

(300-500 words)

For tips on writing a good reflection, review the following resource:

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

Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

Answer all of the following questions:

- Explain how you will follow the steps in your action plan and what you see as the benefit of completing this micro-credential.
- How will your action plan benefit the students in your school or classroom?

Passing: The educator reflects on using research-based teaching strategies to support multilingual learners within a standards-based framework for future daily lesson planning and instructional delivery.