



Foundational Skills HQIM for Multilingual Learners

Characteristics and Components to Look for

Purpose

There are millions of multilingual learners (MLs) in U.S. schools; they represent approximately 10% of the student population.¹ These students are expected to meet the same rigorous learning standards as their native English-speaking peers while also learning to speak, understand, read, and write in a new language, which is critical to their success in school. Instruction Partners designed this list of look-fors to support school and system staff in evaluating how well early literacy curricular materials address the needs of MLs. Fluent decoding is foundational for reading comprehension; however, foundational skills instructional resources alone often don't support MLs fully. This document represents a synthesis of how to look for ML-specific strategies in foundational skills curricular materials. It can help identify where materials may have gaps so they can be supplemented appropriately to ensure that MLs have access to the tools they need to become fluent speakers, readers, and writers.

At the end of this document, there is a references section that includes resources to support extended learning. If your school or system is in the process of reviewing, adopting, and implementing new curricular materials, you may also be interested in Instruction Partner's **Curriculum Support Guide** (CSG), which provides phases of suggested action steps.

How to use this document

Educators and leaders can use this document to review and evaluate instructional and curricular materials in conjunction with existing guidance for reviewing foundational skills resources (e.g., **EdReports Curriculum Reviews**, **EdReports Rubric Review Criteria**, **EdReports Evidence Guide**, **Structured Literacy: Instructional Material Review Rubric**); it is not meant to be a stand-alone document.

¹ National Center for Education Statistics, “English Learners in Public Schools,” Institute of Education Sciences, accessed October 3, 2022, <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf/english-learners>.



Additionally, it can be used to support discussions about how to enhance those materials to be more responsive to the needs of MLs in any classroom/setting. For example, when there is no evidence of a component or characteristic as listed in the chart, that may be an opportunity to discuss supplementary or complementary material options and/or instructional enhancements to meet that need.

Curricular materials may present strategies and supports for MLs in multiple ways (e.g., side notes that indicate a teacher move, embedded activities for building background, notations indicating when small-group discussions in primary languages may be advantageous). However, some curricula don't include any strategies to support MLs at all and no curricula could capture every support a student might need. This document can be used to initiate and guide conversations about how schools and/or systems may find and/or create complementary materials to better respond to the needs of MLs.

Components and characteristics that support MLs

<i>Materials articulate opportunities for students to...</i>	Look for materials that....	No evidence Notes:	Some evidence Notes:	Consistent evidence Notes:
Activate, affirm, and build on their funds of knowledge²	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Position students as co-facilitators of learning and valuable contributors to the learning environment• Remind teachers that students come with a wealth of knowledge and skills; suggest specific ways to leverage those assets strategically in the lesson (e.g., pointing out potential connections to students'			

²Carlos G. Vélez-ibáñez and James B. Greenberg, "Formation and Transformation of Funds of Knowledge Among U.S.-Mexican Households," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, (1992), accessed October 3, 2022, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Formation-and-Transformation-of-Funds-of-Knowledge-V%C3%A9lez-ib%C3%A1%C3%B1ez-Greenberg/1e80f609odo52008ad29ab58c8ff1668a5c7cb08>.



<i>Materials articulate opportunities for students to...</i>	Look for materials that....	No evidence Notes:	Some evidence Notes:	Consistent evidence Notes:
	<p>primary languages or opportunities for students to bring in their primary languages by noting similar sounds the teacher has heard the student use when speaking their primary languages, asking students how to say a word that includes the target sound or skill in their primary languages, asking pairs or groups of students to discuss a concept or skill in their primary languages to make connections and comparisons themselves)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Give ideas and strategies for activating or connecting to background knowledge/schema (e.g., routinely prompting students to share what they know or their experiences about a topic or skill at the start of the lesson) ● Provide opportunities for students to choose activities that will allow them to practice the target skills, select topics of interest to use to apply new skills, and/or identify vocabulary words that they would like to learn more about (e.g., within familiar, play-based experiences) ● Provide prompts for teachers to use and reinforce self-affirming language such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “I’ve made progress in understanding ____ . I am really good at ____ and can use that to learn ____.” ● “I can use my language to help me learn a new language and/or new skills.” ● “Multilingualism is a superpower! My brain is stronger when I know multiple languages.” 			



<p><i>Materials articulate opportunities for students to...</i></p>	<p>Look for materials that....</p>	<p>No evidence</p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Some evidence</p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Consistent evidence</p> <p>Notes:</p>
<p>Make connections to primary languages and new language</p>	<p>Provide guidance on how to bridge primary language skills to the new language and note specific cross-language connections (see Bridging Foundational Skills between Languages for ideas and examples specific to phonemes). Examples of this guidance include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● giving an example of how a sound pattern is the same or similar between languages (e.g., English -tion and Spanish -ción and how they both represent nouns of action/condition) ● encouraging students to think about and/or identify cognates (i.e., words that sound and/or look the same across the languages) ● prompting the teacher to make connections between foundational skills concepts such as the concept of syllabification, rhyming, deletion, and text direction—for instance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “How do you say ___ in your language? How many syllables can we count?” ○ “Can you think of two words that rhyme in your primary language? In English?” ○ “What if we remove the first sound in [word from student’s language]? What do we have left?” ○ “In English, we read text from left to right. Does your language use a writing system? If so, do you know which direction is used for your language?” ● prompting teachers to model new skills (e.g., sounds, sound patterns, intonation patterns, fluency) and asking students what is similar or different between their primary languages and the language being taught 			



Materials articulate opportunities for students to...	Look for materials that....	No evidence Notes:	Some evidence Notes:	Consistent evidence Notes:
Connect to their own and new cultures and perspectives³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge students’ diverse life experiences—culturally and linguistically; value students’ backgrounds • Include the study of texts and topics that are culturally and linguistically responsive to students, including diverse authorship and diverse representation of perspectives and experiences • Take special care to address sensitive subjects with respect—including carefully chosen images and videos that 1) are free of biases, negative misconceptions, negative profiling, and negative stereotypes and 2) that build background and context in order to provide opportunities for all learners to engage meaningfully • Provide learning opportunities that focus on strengthening self-understanding and social-emotional skills • Look for opportunities to elicit students’ lived experiences • Caution against stereotype threat and deficit thinking based on student proficiency level, immigration status, language, or race • Prompt teacher reflection on their own cultural identities and how those may impact their presentation of content, expectations for student progress and work styles, interactions with students, learning preferences, notions of success, methods of feedback, etc. 			
Build oral skills to support reading and writing skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include activities that promote authentic student interactions and discussions about the content that also yield extensions for reading and writing based on that experience; for example: 			

³ The first four bullets in this row were modified from page 26 of New Mexico Public Education Department. *High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM): A Resource Manual for Identifying, Selecting, and Implementing HQIM*. Accessed January 3, 2023. https://region7comprehensivecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/gravity_forms/8-b374f2fd02733c6aeca06c025c48a190f/2021/07/HQIM-Resource-Manual.pdf



Materials articulate opportunities for students to...	Look for materials that....	No evidence Notes:	Some evidence Notes:	Consistent evidence Notes:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students engage in play-based activities that may elicit authentic language that teachers can leverage during instruction to make connections to new language skills, including foundational reading skills. ○ Students co-create lists of words that feature the target sound or sound pattern in English and their primary languages. Then, they practice writing the words. ○ After reading a decodable text, students think up and share another ending to the text. Then, they practice writing any of the words they used that include the target or previously taught sound, sound patterns, and/or sight words. ● Include activities in which MLs practice using foundational skills vocabulary (e.g., the technical terms in the curriculum related to phonemic awareness, phonics, orthography) in their sentences; for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Asking students to repeat how to articulate sounds in complete sentences (e.g., “To make the ___ sound, I ___ with my lips/mouth/tongue”) ○ Asking students to explain how they know that two or more words rhyme using the word “rhyme” in their answer ● Structure activities so that students use their own languages first to allow the teacher to leverage those languages to make connections to the vocabulary used in the curriculum (e.g., asking students to describe what their mouths or lips do when they make a sound, and using words the students produce to connect to the academic or technical term) 			



Materials articulate opportunities for students to...	Look for materials that....	No evidence Notes:	Some evidence Notes:	Consistent evidence Notes:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Suggest a protocol for ensuring that students have multiple opportunities to hear and say sounds and/or words before they are expected to read and write them ● Provide opportunities for students to make connections between new words or concepts from the lesson to their primary languages, background knowledge, and/or experiences ● Include checks for comprehension of the conversation and of vocabulary being used ● Prompt explicit vocabulary instruction and student opportunities to use key vocabulary in conversations and/or writing tasks connected to meaningful content tasks and texts; this might look like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ cross-content language, otherwise known as Tier 2 vocabulary (e.g., transitional phrases, signal words, connectors related to comparing, sequencing, justifying, telling causes) ○ content-specific language, otherwise known as the technical language of the content topic or Tier 3 vocabulary (e.g., phoneme, character, illustrations) 			
Understand the content and language expectation(s) of the lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide an explicit expectation for language practice, or a language objective, in the lesson that is connected to the target foundational skill(s) such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Asking and answering questions about a decodable text they read ○ Sharing and comparing their own ideas and examples (e.g., sharing examples of words they know that use a target sound) 			



Materials articulate opportunities for students to...	Look for materials that....	No evidence Notes:	Some evidence Notes:	Consistent evidence Notes:
	<p>in English and their primary languages and discussing the differences between languages)</p> <p>For more examples, see #6 of Leading Programs that Accelerate Language and Foundational Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note how to precisely model the target skills, to make language and thinking visible to children by calling attention to the sounds and the choice of words, and how to build sentences to communicate ideas related to the topics they are learning about 			
Practice the expectations of the lesson multiple times in multiple ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include meaningful, engaging activity ideas and strategies for speaking, listening, reading, and writing that are connected to the content standards for early literacy (i.e., alphabetic awareness, sound and symbol correspondence, phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension), language proficiency standards, and learning goals Include a balance of receptive and productive language practice opportunities with multiple opportunities to listen to the new language and try producing the target sounds, sound patterns, words, and sentences that feature those targets Prompt a variety of flexible grouping structures (e.g., whole groups, small groups, pairs, and one-on-one discussions, homogeneous primary language groups, heterogeneous language groups) Give ideas for supports or strategies for scaffolding up both content and language for MLs who have beginning levels of English proficiency (e.g., visuals, models, manipulatives, experiences, peer language models, primary language connections) 			



Materials articulate opportunities for students to...	Look for materials that....	No evidence Notes:	Some evidence Notes:	Consistent evidence Notes:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Offer teachers tips to give feedback in response to student language production that build on current demonstrations of proficiency and guide students to the next level (e.g., when students use divergent articulations of a sound, continue to model and describe the articulation gestures, and ask students to use a mirror to check their gestures compared to the teacher’s or a picture) ● Include ideas for small-group differentiation to support continued learning and practice of the target skill(s) and to extend the lesson for students who have mastered the target skill 			
Practice decoding skills in-context* using controlled texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include texts (i.e., phrases, sentences, books) that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ align to the curricular scope and sequence ○ prompt application for the phonics skills in the current lesson as well as those from the prior lessons ○ include themes connected to rich grade-level content and children’s daily lives and interests OR provide a list of possible questions that help students make personal connections to the text such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What did you like best about what we just read? ■ What does what we just read remind you of? ■ Were there any words you wanted help to read? ● Provide opportunities for students to make connections between a new word or concept from the decodable text to their primary languages, background knowledge, and/or experiences 			



Materials articulate opportunities for students to...	Look for materials that....	No evidence Notes:	Some evidence Notes:	Consistent evidence Notes:
	<p>*If the curriculum includes out-of-context activities with “nonsense” words, it will also include prompts for teachers to indicate that the word has no meaning and they are using it solely for the purpose of practicing their decoding skills.</p>			
Practice reading comprehension skills using grade-level, complex texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide texts that authentically and positively reflect the elements of students’ backgrounds, such as language, culture, ways of thinking, and interests or provide a list of questions that help students make personal connections to the text such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What does what we just read remind you of? ○ What part did you like best? ○ What is something you learned? ● Include texts of diverse characters, contexts, and authors ● Provide opportunities for students to make connections between new words or concepts to their languages, background knowledge, and/or experiences ● Suggest reading comprehension building activities such as whisper reading, choral reading, echo reading, partner reading, teacher think-alouds, structured interactions, and academic conversations using talk moves and language frames ● Include intentionally sequenced questions to build knowledge and arrive at grade-level analysis to enable all students to make meaning of and think about the text ● Outline text and language analysis tasks when developmentally appropriate 			



<i>Materials articulate opportunities for students to...</i>	Look for materials that....	No evidence Notes:	Some evidence Notes:	Consistent evidence Notes:
Get feedback and reflect on their progress toward the learning expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include strategies for student self-assessment and reflection to build agency and autonomy such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ prompting students to reflect on how well they met the learning expectations or what they still need support with ○ suggesting processes for student goal setting and self-identifying what they are doing well and what is still challenging for them ● Include a variety of formative and interim assessment ideas and resources connected to the learning expectations to identify student skill levels and when targeted instruction in small-group activities may provide needed support ● Suggest early literacy, specifically foundational skills, assessments that are normed for MLs and offered in their primary languages, using structures based on how students learn to read in those languages (e.g., Spanish assessments that include survey of common syllable knowledge) ● Provide prompts for teachers to respond to student work with affirming feedback such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “You are making so much progress! I appreciate how you _____. That’s what good readers/writers do.” ○ “Wow! I loved how you used your own language to make a connection.” ○ “I see how you think that. Another way to think about it is__.” 			



Extensions for this document

Leaders can extend this resource by facilitating a session in which teachers use their own resources about instructional strategies (e.g., [Being Responsive to Multilingual Learners in Early Literacy Instruction](#)) to add additional look-fors and teacher prompts.

Though these look-fors refer to curricular materials, they can also support conversations about instruction and student opportunities. For example, with the look-for “position students as co-facilitators of learning and valuable contributors to the learning environment” leaders, coaches, and educators could brainstorm additional examples of what that might look and/or sound like in a classroom and refine any coaching tools that include that information.

References and additional resources

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