MEETING THE NEEDS OF ENGLISH LEARNERS
WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES

BRIEF 5

Promoting Leadership and Collaboration for an Effective Multitiered System of Supports for English Learners

IDEAs that Work
Office of Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education

elite²
English Learner Institute for Teaching and Excellence²

ELLIPSES
English Learner Literacy Intervention Programs and Strategies
ENSURING SUCCESS

PROJECT LEE

MTSS for ELs

Support

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Contributors to This Brief

Project ELITE²

Leticia Romero Grimaldo
Shannon Giroir
Tim T. Andress

Project LEE

Amanda K. Sanford
Julie Esparza Brown

Project ELLIPSES

Linda O. Cavazos
Alba Ortiz
Elsa Cardenas-Hagan

Multitiered Instructional Frameworks

When implemented effectively, multitiered instructional frameworks support educators in providing high-quality culturally and linguistically responsive instruction for English learners, including those in need of supplemental support in language and literacy. Further, when a multitiered system of supports (MTSS) includes assessment procedures aligned with the language(s) of instruction and informed by educators' knowledge of the language-acquisition process, students with disabilities are accurately identified.

In this fifth brief in the series, three model demonstration projects describe their work implementing multitiered instructional models for English learners with and without disabilities in grades 3 to 5 and describe key leadership and capacity-building practices that support successful implementation of MTSS.

Overview

This is the fifth brief in the series Meeting the Needs of English Learners With and Without Disabilities. In this brief, key strategies to foster leadership and build capacity among educators for effective multitiered frameworks for English learners (ELs) with and without disabilities are highlighted. Additionally, guidance focuses on strategies for building culturally and linguistically responsive leaders at the district, school, and classroom levels to promote a successful MTSS for ELs.

Who Should Read This Brief?

This brief is for school and district leaders—administrators, instructional coaches, and educators—who support the implementation of high-quality instruction and academic supports within MTSS for ELs. Although the term "leader" can refer to a person with a specific title or role, we conceptualize leadership as a practice in which all educators can engage. This brief provides recommendations for the following:

- Fostering leadership as a foundation for successful implementation of MTSS for ELs
- Building capacity for successful implementation of the MTSS framework through professional learning and collective participation
- Developing and providing job-embedded professional learning and fostering collaboration among staff who implement MTSS

Structure of This Brief

Brief 5 provides guidance for educational leaders in implementing and supporting the evidence-based practices emphasized throughout the series. We begin by describing the role of leadership within MTSS for ELs and core practices that promote cultural and linguistic responsiveness throughout MTSS. Guidance is provided for building educators' capacity to appropriately serve and continuously improve services for ELs, specifically through the design and delivery of meaningful professional learning opportunities. For optimal success, practitioners should use the guidance and practices outlined in this and the other briefs in the series.

The Role of Leadership Within MTSS Frameworks for ELs

MTSS is a multilevel prevention system that integrates data-based decision-making and instruction to improve the academic success of all students.[1] When implemented well, MTSS is a framework for accurately identifying and addressing the unique learning needs of ELs[2] with and without disabilities and for providing efficient, high-quality instruction and supports. Further, a **culturally and linguistically responsive** MTSS framework that addresses the specific language and literacy needs of ELs ensures that these students are not inappropriately referred for supplemental (Tiers 2 and 3) reading interventions or for special education services.

School and district leaders play an essential role in the implementation of MTSS for ELs. Their first step is to ensure that all educators, school staff, and families understand that they play a role in the success of MTSS and that collaboration is key to achieving its goals. Effective leaders consistently communicate a shared vision for the MTSS framework and articulate how MTSS aligns with the school's vision for bi/multilingual learners' (including ELs') academic success. Additionally, effective leaders support systematic and ongoing collaboration among **all** school staff who serve ELs, including bilingual education, English as a second language, and general education teachers; interventionists; instructional coaches; special educators; and speech and language pathologists. All of these educators must also collaborate with the families of ELs. Because understanding and meeting the diverse learning needs of ELs with and without disabilities typically requires shifts in school culture and practices, fostering leadership for effective change is a critical component of effective MTSS for ELs.

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Leadership Practices

At the foundation of effective MTSS for ELs is the commitment of school and district leaders to incorporate culturally and linguistically responsive practices (CLRP) within all tiers of instruction and all MTSS decision-making processes. **Core leadership practices** that are essential to ensuring a culturally and linguistically responsive MTSS framework[3] include the following:

- Promoting inclusiveness and high-quality, evidence-based services to ELs through policies, programs, and practices
- Building relationships with families and communities
- Recognizing linguistic and cultural diversity as an asset for learning
- Providing ongoing professional learning around CLRP
- Ensuring equitable access to culturally and linguistically relevant academic resources
- Recognizing and addressing bias

Building relationships with families and communities is at the core of culturally and linguistically responsive schools. Families should be treated with respect and dignity, and the school climate should be welcoming and affirming. School and district leaders should also build a culture and school climate that recognizes diversity

1 Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, n.d.
2 The term "EL" is used throughout, in alignment with the federal definition of students who are identified or classified for specific language support services. However, we acknowledge that other terms more fully capture students' linguistic strengths, including "bi/multilingual" and "emergent bilingual." These additional terms are used when appropriate.
3 Minkos et al., 2017; Nelson et al., 2008

as an asset for learning. Conversations at the school level should focus on students' strengths, or funds of knowledge,[4] that teachers can build on during instruction across tiers.

Effective school and district leaders are culturally self-aware and understand that their own cultural and linguistic experiences, beliefs, values, and interests influence the type of leader they are. They incorporate various modes of communication and are conscious of the dynamics of cultural interactions.[5] They recognize diversity as an asset for learning by adopting curricula that draw on the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students and by including cultural and linguistic responsiveness in educator professional learning, observations, and evaluations. To ensure equitable access, curricula and academic resources mirror the populations served and are enhanced when needed.[6]

Finally, school and district leaders incorporate a strategic action plan to recognize and address bias in their schools. Educators' perceptions of ELs affect students' learning trajectories, and "downwardly biased" perceptions of students can perpetuate a focus on deficits ("limited" English language proficiency) rather than assets (multilingualism).[7] Thus, culturally and linguistically responsive leaders promote assets-based approaches throughout the MTSS framework, ensuring that ELs' bi/multilingualism is acknowledged as a strength that benefits their learning and academic success. Effective leaders have a personal commitment to promoting equitable access to evidence-based, high-quality instruction across tiers for all students,[8] and they work collaboratively with their colleagues to recognize and address deficit orientations toward ELs.

Action steps leaders can take for recognizing and addressing bias include the following:

- Disaggregating data by different student groups and creating a plan to address disproportionality
- Assessing school climate using a variety of measures (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups, informal gatherings)
- Using multiple sources of data to make instructional decisions for students
- Reframing the questions in data meetings in ways that highlight student strengths and assets and focus on educators' instructional practices (strengths and needs)

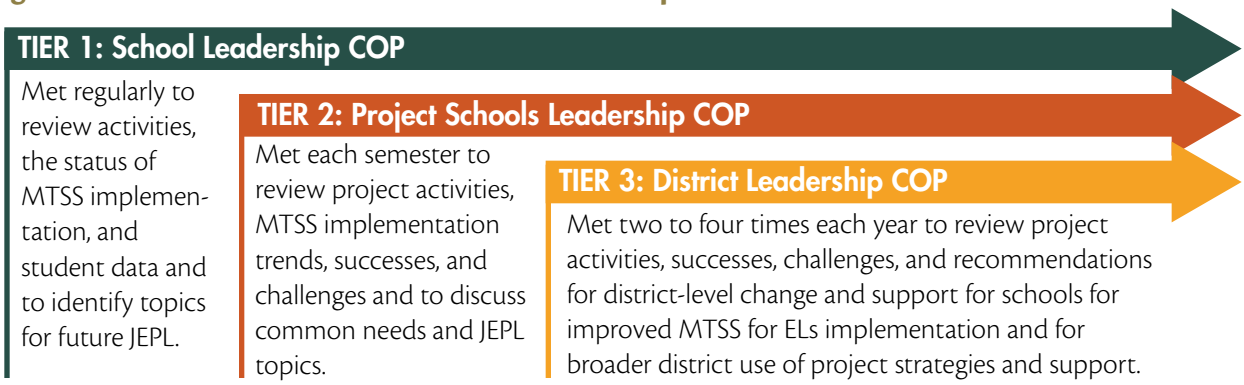
Project ELLIPSES In-Action Example: A Multitiered Community of Practice Approach for Leadership in MTSS

The importance of leadership involvement in MTSS implementation cannot be overstated. Project ELLIPSES involved administrators at both the school and district central offices to facilitate buy-in for project activities and the implementation of culturally and linguistically responsive MTSS frameworks. This multitiered community of practice (COP) approach to leadership engagement broadened understanding of the needs of ELs across departments (e.g., curriculum and instruction, bilingual education, special education, dyslexia). It also highlighted how MTSS frameworks could enhance core instruction for all students and supplemental intervention for students with learning difficulties or disabilities. Moreover,

4 Moll et al., 1992
5 Van Roekel, 2008
6 Gay, 2018; Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015
7 Adair et al., 2017; Martínez, 2018; Umansky & Dumont, 2019
8 Barrio & Peak, 2017

because essential elements of MTSS implementation (e.g., universal screening and progress monitoring assessment) were driven by district policy, involving central office leaders provided opportunities to share updates on project activities and bring attention to practices that needed to be added or modified. This communication helped broaden support for, and implementation of, culturally and linguistically responsive MTSS practices beyond the three project schools. District leaders appreciated the collaborative nature of the COP and the inclusion of district initiatives on project work and related data. All participating school and district leaders' voices were represented in the discussion, resulting in change that improved MTSS implementation.

Figure 1: Multitiered School and District Leadership COP



Tier 1 School Leadership COP

The school-level COP involved the school principal, assistant principal, and dean of instruction. They met regularly to review data, discuss evidence-based practices related to job-embedded professional learning sessions, review classroom observation data on frequency of use of evidence-based practices, and review changes in language and literacy instruction for ELs. A systematic and comprehensive reflection on project activities that would enhance fidelity of implementation and sustainability of MTSS practices was also conducted during COP meetings.

Tier 2 Project ELLIPSES Schools' Leadership COP

The project schools' leadership COP included the school principals, assistant principals, and deans of instruction from the three participating schools. The COP meetings were used to discuss student data trends and recommend changes stemming from the professional learning that was provided to participating school staff. This group met at the end of each semester. School leaders appreciated a COP structure that allowed them to discuss project activities and successes and challenges related to implementation of culturally and linguistically responsive MTSS practices and similar topics needing additional project support. Leaders shared ways they were improving implementation on their campuses. These COP discussions identified how school leaders supported implementation.

Tier 3 District Leadership COP

The district leader COP included staff who provided oversight for literacy and learning services for ELs in district schools: EL, special education, and dyslexia coordinators; MTSS directors; and associate superintendents. The district COP convened two to four times per year to review project activities and recommendations regarding MTSS implementation.

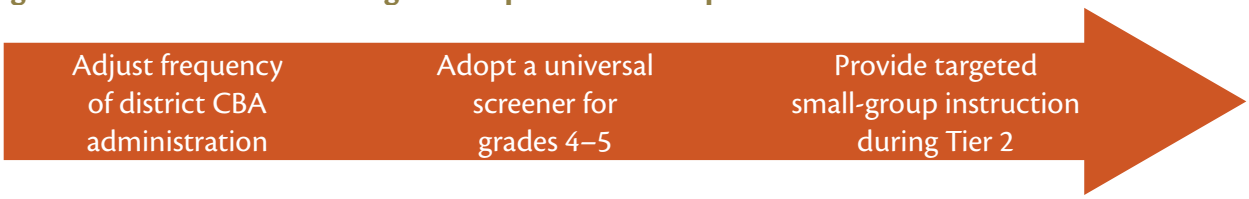
Classroom observation data were reviewed related to the frequency and use of evidence-based strategies to improve language and literacy achievement for ELs. These strategies had been targeted in job-embedded professional development provided by project staff. The multitiered school and district leadership COP approach for MTSS implementation allowed project staff to discuss issues with district leaders and brainstorm solutions and recommendations for change in practices across schools.

District-Level COP Summer Workday

Project ELLIPSES staff held a summer workday COP with district leaders to discuss some critical changes needed to improve MTSS implementation for ELs. These needs included adjusted frequency of the district-mandated curriculum-based assessments for ELs, a district universal screener for fourth- and fifth-grade students, and more targeted Tier 2 instruction in smaller groups during the designated Tier 2 block across schools.

After reviewing and discussing data, district leaders recognized the need to improve assessment practices to pinpoint skill gaps and to enhance the use of evidence-based practices to improve student performance on assessments of reading progress. The workday was used to jointly develop an action plan. Outcomes included adopting a universal screening measure for fourth- and fifth-grade students and adjusting the frequency of curriculum-based assessments for students who were performing at or above grade level. Students who were not meeting grade-level expectations would receive targeted intervention, and their progress would be monitored more frequently. The schools' designated Tier 2 block would serve students experiencing reading difficulties in small groups. These were significant changes that aligned existing practices with those recommended in MTSS frameworks.

Figure 2: Recommended Changes to Improve MTSS Implementation



Project LEE In-Action Example: Using the Literacy Implementation Rubric to Improve Learning Outcomes

Decision-Making Framework for ELs in MTSS: The Outcomes-Driven Model

Project LEE worked with school leadership teams to use the outcomes-driven model[9] to improve literacy and language outcomes for ELs. School leadership teams included the principal, literacy specialists, English language development specialists, and grade-level teacher leaders across English and Spanish. The outcomes-driven model is a prevention-oriented data-based decision-making model that includes the following steps: identifying need for support, validating need for support, planning, implementing and evaluating support, and evaluating outcomes.

9 Good et al., 2002

Within this model, we examined student data disaggregated by EL status and evaluated literacy support systems to plan instruction that is culturally and linguistically aligned to students' instructional needs. The main sources of data used were disaggregated curriculum-based measures and the *MTSS for ELs Literacy Implementation Rubric*.[10] The instructional leadership team used this rubric to evaluate the extent to which their school's system was successfully implementing the features of MTSS to improve literacy outcomes for ELs.

The Literacy Implementation Rubric

The *MTSS for ELs: Literacy Implementation Rubric* was adapted from the *MTSS Fidelity of Implementation Rubric*.[11] It is a school-level systems evaluation rubric with the purpose of (a) determining the extent to which schools are implementing the core features of MTSS in culturally and linguistically responsive fashion, (b) identifying strengths and areas of need within MTSS for systems-level action planning, and (c) determining whether the implementation of MTSS features is related to changes in student outcomes.

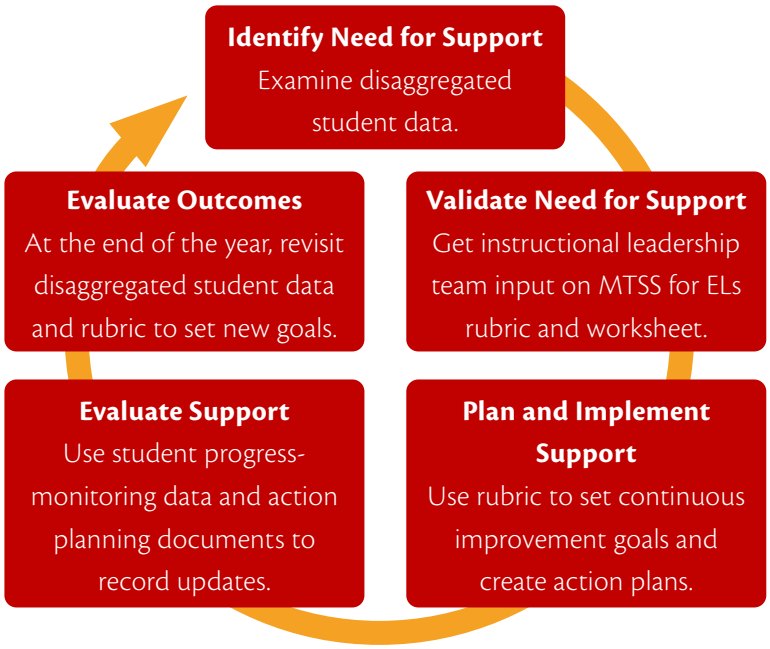


Figure 3. Outcomes-Driven Data-Based Decision-Making: Literacy Implementation Rubric

The rubric includes five sections: (a) assessment, (b) data-based decision-making, (c) multilevel instruction, (d) infrastructure and support mechanisms, and (e) fidelity and evaluation. There are 51 total items (41 related to the original MTSS fidelity features that were modified to include specific attention to ELs and 10 additional focus items related to CLRP). For each item, schools rate themselves on a scale of 1 to 5 with anchors for 1: not in place, 3: partially in place, or 5: fully in place. Items partially in place indicated implementation with room to strengthen; items fully in place met full criteria.

Identifying and Validating Need for Support Using the Implementation Worksheet

To identify and validate student need for support and system improvement, two key sources of data were used. School instructional leadership teams looked side by side at disaggregated student literacy and language data in both English and Spanish and rated themselves on the MTSS for ELs rubric. Specifically, the teams reviewed the rubric and used green highlighters to identify which features were fully in place, yellow highlighters to identify features that were partially in place, then pink highlighters to identify areas not yet in place. After discussion, leadership teams rated the school system on the level of implementation of each item and provided evidence for their rating on the accompanying MTSS for ELs: Literacy Implementation Rubric Scoring Worksheet.

10 Project LEE et al., 2021
11 Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, 2021

Planning and Implementing Support Using the Action Planning Document

School used the ratings to identify strengths and potential areas of growth based on student data and their system's self-evaluation. They summarized the strengths and areas of need on the MTSS for ELs: Literacy Action Plan document and then identified a **continuous improvement plan goal** that aligned with their students' needs. This was a central goal for the school and was reported to the district curriculum administrator to provide focus and accountability for the work. For our partner school teams, improving literacy outcomes for ELs was their goal. Once a goal was identified, at least three observable, measurable actions were identified to help each team achieve the goal. These actions included collecting and reviewing progress-monitoring data on language and literacy, implementing language supports for ELs, and video self-reflection cycles.

Evaluating Support and Outcomes

At the conclusion of each year, teams reviewed student state assessment data, English language proficiency data, and curriculum-based measurement data and then reassessed their school systems to identify successes, challenges, and goals for the following year, starting the iterative process again.

Alignment of MTSS With Effective Practices for ELs: A Tool for Leaders

Throughout this series, guidance has been provided for ensuring that assessment procedures, intervention planning and delivery, and the special education referral process take into consideration **the role of language** and **bilingual and biliteracy development** in students' academic achievement.

One tool leaders can use for evaluation and planning is the *MTSS for ELs: Literacy Implementation Rubric*.[12] The rubric aligns with the essential components of MTSS for literacy and the infrastructure necessary for successful implementation. It is accompanied by a worksheet and action planning document with guiding questions. The worksheet is used to record ratings and notes for each section, and the action planning document is used to summarize strengths and areas of need and to track progress on goals.

The tool and accompanying documents are available at: **www.mtss4els.org**

Building Capacity Through Effective Professional Learning and Collective Participation

In its broad definition, "**building capacity**" refers to focused efforts to "improve the abilities, skills, and expertise of educators"[13] and is achieved primarily through educators' access to high-quality professional growth opportunities. Leaders play a key role in building their school's internal capacity to meet the needs of ELs by ensuring that educators have access to meaningful professional learning activities and opportunities to develop as instructional leaders.

12 Project LEE et al., 2021
13 Great Schools Partnership, 2013

Supporting Job-Embedded Approaches to Professional Learning

Approaches to teacher professional learning have evolved considerably over the past 2 decades, with the goal of more effectively engaging and supporting educators in the type of learning that improves student achievement. Research has consistently shown that when "workshop-style" professional learning approaches fail to validate teachers' expertise, do not align with their unique learning needs, and do not include systems for ongoing professional collaboration, teaching behaviors rarely change.[14] High-performing educational systems foster a professional **culture of learning**, recognize **teacher agency**, build teachers' capacity to **lead and mentor**, and coordinate **job-embedded professional learning (JEPL) opportunities** that align with teacher and student needs.[15]

Unlike traditional "sit-and-get" teacher trainings, JEPL models emphasize time for teachers to apply new knowledge to their classroom teaching with targeted and ongoing support. Research has shown that JEPL in the form of expert modeling, observation of teaching, self-reflection, and performance feedback is positively related to quality of instruction.[16] For example, Cavazos and colleagues[17] demonstrated that critical components of JEPL (e.g., modeling, observation, feedback) improved teachers' content knowledge and implementation of evidence-based instructional methods for ELs in the elementary grades. Another advantage offered by JEPL is the opportunity to differentiate professional learning for teachers working toward individualized learning goals, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all framework.[18]

In the following sections, we introduce **three key practices** leaders can implement for building educator capacity within a JEPL framework: instructional coaching, professional learning communities, and self-reflection on practice.

Coaching Areas to Address for Implementation of MTSS for ELs

To effectively serve ELs, leaders must take into account their campus's areas of need when planning JEPL, such as the following:

- Language-acquisition process
- CLRP
- MTSS for ELs
- Bilingual education model
- Sheltered instruction
- Self-reflective practice
- Family engagement
- Assets-based instruction
- Teacher leadership skills

Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaches (ICs) play a significant role in educators' ongoing development of professional expertise in serving ELs. Although definitions of instructional coaching vary in the literature, it is essentially understood as a continuum of professional support provided by an on-site expert to develop practitioners' skills through a variety of on-the-job learning activities (i.e., observation, performance feedback, guided self-reflection).[19] Additionally, coaching provides differentiated support, emphasizes collaborative approaches to addressing instructional challenges,[20] and facilitates practitioners' ability to translate knowledge and skills into their classroom

14 Desimone, 2009; Desimone et al., 2002
15 Calvert, 2016; Kaplan et al., 2015
16 Diamond & Powell, 2011; Hairrell et al., 2011; Hsieh et al., 2009
17 Cavazos et al., 2018
18 Kelly & Churkowski, 2015
19 Rush & Sheldon, 2011
20 Knight, 2007

instruction.[21] When implemented effectively, instructional coaching has been an effective driver of teachers' implementation of evidence-based practices.[22] In MTSS for ELs, ICs support teachers in specific areas related to multitiered instruction and educational decision-making, such as those listed in the sidebar.

Professional Learning Communities for Building Instructional Leadership

Given the diversity of ELs' learning needs, educators need to build a knowledge base of how to serve ELs on their campus, share expertise with their peers, and engage in team problem solving. One common framework for supporting JEPL is the establishment of campus professional learning communities (PLCs),[23] defined broadly as "a form of professional development in which small groups of educators with shared interests work together with the goals of expanding their knowledge and improving their craft."[24]

When implemented well, PLCs provide a learning-focused process to improve instruction.[25] Research has demonstrated a correlation between PLCs and improved quality of teachers' professional learning and instruction.[26] As a situated practice, PLCs further teachers' expertise through their increased participation in the profession[27] and acknowledge teachers' own classrooms as powerful sites for their professional learning.[28] In this view, PLCs can be used as a framework for professionals to examine their practice and collectively "pose problems that emerge in their experience from acting in the world."[29] One common way leaders can implement PLCs is to organize around grade-level teams using established time for planning and team collaboration (e.g., allotted planning periods).

JEPL Practices for Developing Teacher Leadership

- ICs and administrators view teachers as experts, planners, advisors, presenters, and decision-makers.
- Practitioners are supported and involved in analyzing data and determining priorities for ELs.
- ICs and administrators act as facilitators, rather than controllers, of PLC discussions.
- Professional learning topics and activities are teacher driven and align with the team's goals to improve instruction and meet the needs of ELs.
- Teachers have opportunities to plan, lead, and present professional learning sessions on topics that are relevant to the ELs they serve.
- ICs and administrators use information learned from classroom observations to do the following:
  - Connect teachers for peer support (i.e., a teacher with expertise in an instructional practice can support a teacher who needs support in this area)
  - Highlight observed classroom successes during PLC meetings and plan ways teachers can support their colleagues in implementing effective practices for ELs
- ICs and administrators create systems for peer modeling (e.g., demonstration classrooms available for peer observation, model videos shown during PLCs).

21 Joyce & Showers, 1982
22 Metz & Bartley, 2012; Project ELITE², 2021; Snyder et al., 2015
23 Cochran-Smith, 2015
24 Dimino et al., 2015, p. 1
25 Cowan et al., 2012; Pirtle & Tobia, 2014
26 Vescio et al., 2008
27 Adler, 2000, p. 37
28 Putnam & Borko, 2000
29 Naidoo & Kirch, 2016

As PLC members' instructional expertise grows, they should be empowered to take more responsibility over the direction of the PLC meetings. By releasing this responsibility, school leaders allow teachers to take control of their professional growth, become leaders in their teaching community, and fully engage with the school's vision for the success of bi/multilingual learners. The sidebar on the previous page outlines some practices for developing teacher leadership through a PLC framework.

Educators as Self-Reflective Practitioners

Educators of ELs need continued professional support both in making technical "research-to-practice" connections in their teaching and in developing positive perceptions of ELs and their academic potential.[30] Cultural and linguistic responsiveness is a disposition that is developed less through a set of prepackaged strategies and more through critical reflection and collective dialogue among practitioners.[31]

In effective MTSS frameworks for ELs, educators have regular opportunities to think critically about their instructional decisions, observe how students use their linguistic and cultural strengths during classroom instruction, and evaluate the impact of their teaching practices on students' learning.[32] In this way, self-reflection represents a highly contextualized learning opportunity for educators to "restructure prior understandings and refine pedagogical thinking."[33]

For reflection to result in meaningful teacher outcomes, instructional leaders provide systematic guidance and tools for self-reflection, orienting teachers to examine events of significance in their lessons. Leaders guide educators in extending their reflections to **action**—that is, using knowledge gained from self-reflection to transform their current behaviors or practices.[34]

Table 1 describes some initial steps educators can take to develop a culture of reflection on their campus. After that, the Project ELITE² in-action example demonstrates how these practices were implemented at a demonstration campus.

Table 1: Developing a Culture of Reflection Within Schools

Key Practice for Fostering a Culture of Reflection	Initial Steps Leaders Can Take
Establish a framework for professional collaboration.	• Capitalize on **existing school structures** for teacher collaboration (e.g., grade-level planning periods). • Establish **professional norms** for PLC meetings. • **Facilitate** educators' problem solving around implementation obstacles.

30 Lucas et al., 2013; Umanksy & Dumont, 2019
31 Larrivee, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002
32 Estapa et al., 2016; van Es & Sherin, 2002
33 Calandra & Brantley-Dias, 2010, p. 10
34 Center on Education Policy Research, 2015; Freire, 1996; Naidoo & Kirch, 2016

Key Practice for Fostering a Culture of Reflection	Initial Steps Leaders Can Take
Introduce self-video reflection as a tool for professional learning.	• **Build trust** by ensuring that self-videos are nonevaluative and are viewed by only the teachers themselves. • Introduce self-video reflection after educators have had time to **implement new practices** and work out the basics (e.g., logistics, classroom management). • Use **thoughtfully timed** self-captured video around specific learning goals.
Guide educators in their self-reflections.	• **Review the observation tools** that leaders (i.e., ICs) use when observing teachers' instruction. • Modify tools to make them **appropriate for self-observation** (alignment of assessment tools can promote a shared understanding of professional learning objectives). • Communicate clear **learning intentions** to teachers before they engage in self-video reflection. • Provide **reflection prompts** for educators to consider while viewing their lessons. • Offer suggestions for viewing their lessons from **multiple perspectives** (e.g., from the perspective of one or two ELs in their classroom).
Connect teachers' insights to action.	• Create space in PLCs for educators to **share their reflection insights**. • Engage teachers in **applying their reflections** to instructional planning. • Guide teachers in creating two or three **action steps** to implement in future lessons. • Use self-video reflection as a means for teachers to **assess their progress** toward their action steps.

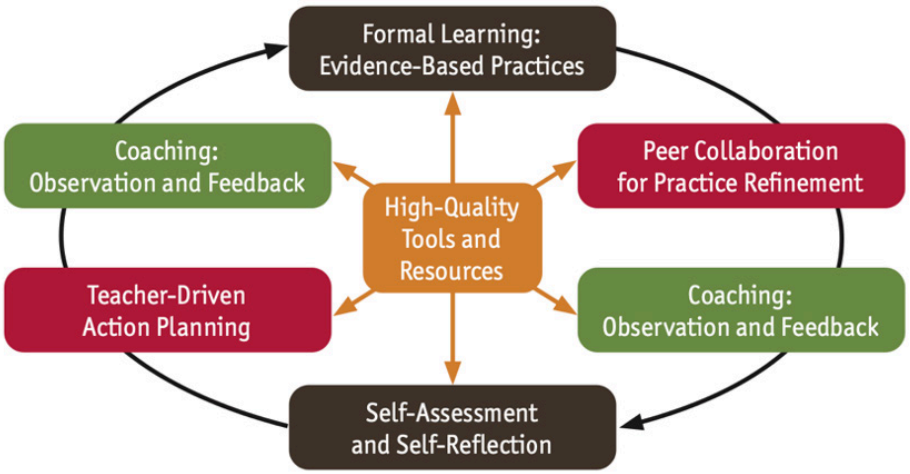
Project ELITE² In-Action Example: Using a Reflective PLC Model to Promote Instructional Change

Meaningful professional learning is a key component of MTSS for ELs, and successful implementation of CLRP requires ongoing job-embedded support that is responsive to educators' needs.

As part of Project ELITE², educators at model demonstration schools participated in a reflective PLC model that stressed collaborative inquiry, guided self-reflection, and constructive peer feedback as a means of improving knowledge, enhancing practice, and increasing effectiveness. In the brief vignette

below, we describe how the model was used at our demonstration campuses to promote instructional change for ELs and how ICs developed leadership among classroom teachers.

Building Instructional Leadership through Collaborative Reflection and Action Planning



At the ELITE² model demonstration campuses, upper-elementary educators worked collaboratively to enhance their literacy instruction for ELs with and without disabilities by providing more opportunities for vocabulary development and student-led discussion around texts. Throughout the school year, educators received instructional coaching and met in PLCs to engage in collaborative inquiry, self-reflection, and peer-observation. With guidance from the IC and ELITE² researchers, teachers analyzed video-recordings of their lesson, critically reflected on their teaching practice, and collaborated with their colleagues to plan action steps for improving language development opportunities for ELs during literacy instruction.

Figure 4: Reflective PLC Model

Analysis of teacher data (interviews, classroom observations, and teachers' written reflections) showed that teachers benefited from thinking critically about their teaching and collaborating with peers. One of the significant themes that emerged was self-reflection as a **transformative** tool in responding to bi/multilingual students' needs. Through analysis of lesson events, teachers gained a deeper understanding of their teaching behaviors and recognized areas of needed change they were not fully conscious of during real-time teaching (e.g., relying on too much teacher-centered talk, reacting negatively to students' contributions). As one educator described, "You think you know what you are like as a teacher … but you don't." Another reported that she could "see [my] behaviors that … may affect the learning of the students."

Equally compelling was teachers re-evaluating their deficit assumptions about ELs' language ability and developing a more nuanced understanding of their students' language skills. Teachers who were initially hesitant to give students autonomy to lead discussions observed how their students became engaged and capable communicators of knowledge during their group discussions—sometimes at higher levels when teachers removed themselves from the group. For example, one teacher described how she "never expected" the benefit of self-reflection to be learning about how her ELs manage discussions and explore substantive topics without prompting. As she put it, "I didn't know that before. That was a **really** interesting insight."

The participating teachers reported that the reflective PLC model was valuable in their professional learning, describing how it led to important insights about their teaching that were difficult to gain while "in the moment." By the end of the project, teachers were enthusiastic about sharing their videos with their colleagues for constructive feedback and collegial support. Teachers described how the professional collaboration helped them become more successful in their implementation, as they had the opportunity to problem solve with fellow professionals and observe peer models of effective practice. PLC activities helped teachers improve both their own learning and their ability to provide support and leadership to their colleagues.

> "PLC discussions help me gain a better understanding of what the instructional model should look like. Also, hearing from other teachers regarding what works for them helped me tweak my approach."
>
> — Fifth-grade teacher

The Takeaway

Educators of ELs need opportunities to analyze their teaching practice, examine their preconceptions about ELs, and cultivate a deeper understanding of students' linguistic knowledge.[35] This brief window into the PLC process at ELITE² campuses is an example of how instructional leaders can facilitate professional collaboration and build teachers' capacity to meet the needs of ELs. With the guidance and support of campus leaders, educators worked together to promote instructional change for ELs, develop a reflective practice, and engage in ongoing professional learning.

Building Capacity to Support the Sustainability of MTSS

Finally, building educator capacity is key to sustaining MTSS for ELs. Effective leaders are continuously planning for sustainability throughout the design and delivery of JEPL. A gradual release of responsibility should be built into the JEPL model that allows administrators and ICs to decrease intensity of professional learning support and promote leadership as their teachers increase in expertise and develop skills in effective MTSS decision-making. The gradual-release model should be flexible and teacher driven, instead of prescriptive and expert driven, to increase teacher buy-in and promote the longevity of instructional change. Master teachers should be supported in becoming mentors and taking on active leadership roles in the implementation of MTSS.

Effective leaders value collaboration and understand that seeking the input of stakeholders (i.e., other administrators, educators, students and their families) is key to creating buy-in and sustainability for new initiatives. Genuine school change is a complex and slow-moving process. School and district leaders may need support in engaging teachers in the shared vision and benefit of collaborative partnerships (e.g., partnerships within the district, partnerships with institutions of higher education). Partners should be effective collaborators, working with school and district leaders to make data-based decisions on the grade, school, or district level. Such partnerships should also provide leaders support in targeting goals for large-scale initiatives, hiring staff, and leading teacher professional learning.

35 Lucas et al., 2013

Key Practices for Leaders in Supporting a Sustained MTSS Framework

1. Create opportunities for teachers and interventionists to provide input in the development of the professional learning plan.
2. Engage in various JEPL activities, such as classroom observation and feedback sessions, coaching, peer observation, and video recording with self-reflection.
3. Discuss with teachers and interventionists best methods for incorporating new literacy practices for ELs into existing curricula and instructional supports across tiers.
4. Provide opportunities for discussion around refining multitiered instructional practices and establishing next steps.

Conclusion

In this last brief of the series, we provided guidance for educational leaders and administrators in implementing and supporting the evidence-based practices emphasized throughout the series. We described the role of leadership within MTSS for ELs and the core practices that promote cultural and linguistic responsiveness. We also provided practical guidance for building educators' capacity to serve ELs, specifically through the design and delivery of meaningful professional learning opportunities and communities of practice. Finally, we provided examples of how the model demonstration projects implemented the recommendations in this brief at their campuses.

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