

# Professional Development Essentials for Educators of Multilingual Learners

# What are the PD Essentials?

These six professional development essentials were created by Understanding Language to assist schools, school districts, state or county offices of education, and professional development providers as they design well-balanced professional development plans for educators of multilingual learners.

These essentials outline an approach to professional learning that is systematic, differentiated, and collaborative. They are aligned to Understanding Language's *Key Principles for ELL Instruction*. They take into account the strengths and supports needed for multilingual learners who encompass a variety of characteristics (e.g., recently arrived, long term \*MLLs, MLLs with disabilities).

The essentials also consider the diverse levels of experience and expertise of educators at any school district. But first and foremost, they place the students themselves at the center of any professional learning plan.

\*We prefer the term multilingual Learners (MLL), which defines students by the linguistic assets that they bring to our classrooms instead of any perceived deficits. EL/ELL is the common term used by states and the federal government as part of accountability. However, EL/ELL can be seen as a deficit term that labels students by what they don't have instead of highlighting their rich cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

# How are the PD Essentials organized?

The six essentials are clustered into three domains so that users can more easily keep in mind the most important aspects of any professional learning plan. For each essential, we provide a short definition as well as sample activities that represent the essential.

## Students at the Center



Essential 1:  
Know your students



Essential 2:  
Respond to student evidence

## Define and Enhance Quality Instruction



Essential 3:  
Apply research to practice



Essential 4:  
Experience and analyze quality instruction



Essential 5:  
Design and enhance educational experiences

## Think Systemically



Essential 6:  
Develop the systemic conditions  
that support English learners

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Taken together, these six essentials can guide designers of professional learning experiences as they plan for their teachers, coaches, and leaders. Of course, any one activity may touch upon a number of these essentials.

For example, teachers might experience a “high support/high challenge” lesson (Essential 4), reflect on the connections between the lesson and what they have learned from research (Essential 3), and then analyze a conversation of two students engaged in an activity from that lesson (Essential 2). These essentials should not be considered in isolation from each other. Rather, they interact and inform each other to insure that professional learning activities address the inherent complexity in effective teaching and learning environments.

We hope these essentials inform systemic approaches to improving educational outcomes for multilingual learners.

## Students at the Center



### ESSENTIAL 1

## Know your students

Multilingual learners are not a monolithic group. Educators deepen their understanding of the characteristics of diverse groups of multilingual learners (i.e. recently arrived MLLs, Long Term MLLs, normatively progressing MLLs, MLLs with disabilities, migrants) and the strengths that they bring to school.

### Sample Activities

- Learn about MLLs' current experience in the classrooms through shadowing an MLL student.
- Read vignettes of differing MLL backgrounds and reflect on the strengths they bring and the supports they may need.
- Consider how a well scaffolded lesson provides access to a wide variety of MLLs.
- Host a panel of current or former multilingual learners to discuss the challenges and supports that were part of their educational experiences.

## Students at the Center



### ESSENTIAL 2

## Respond to student evidence

Educators analyze and reflect on student evidence (e.g., student writing samples, conversations, interim assessment results) in order to shift instructional practice, enhance curriculum, and strengthen systemic structures.

### Sample Activities

- Share a writing sample or oral language transcript with their peers and analyze work using a protocol that addresses the quality of the interaction.
- Aggregate trends from student evidence to determine focal areas for subsequent professional learning.
- Identify areas in current curriculum that can be bolstered to provide stronger supports for students' conversations that build up substantive disciplinary ideas and language.

## Define and Enhance Quality Instruction



### ESSENTIAL 3

## Apply research to practice

Professional learning requires educators to connect and apply key findings from research (e.g., research on language acquisition, scaffolding, student agency) on the teaching of diverse learners to instructional and assessment practices.

### Sample Activities

- Analyze and discuss the implications of the shifts required in curriculum, instruction, and assessment for implementation of the content and language standards.
- Identify UL's *Key Principles of ELL Instruction* in classroom exemplars (e.g. videos, lesson plans, observations).
- Plan lessons/units that incorporate an explicit focus on key disciplinary practices such as argumentation or mathematical reasoning.

## Define and Enhance Quality Instruction



### ESSENTIAL 4

## Experience and analyze quality instruction

Educators experience and analyze instructional activities and practices that mutually reinforce learning of language, content, and disciplinary practices. They reflect on how these activities and practices support student learning.

### Sample Activities

- Observe and analyze instruction through videos and in-person classroom observations.
- Share the successes and challenges they face in implementing effective lessons for MLLs.
- Engage in a high challenge/high support lesson as students and then reflect on how the lesson structure and scaffolding routines supported their simultaneous learning of content, disciplinary practices, and academic uses of language.



## Define and Enhance Quality Instruction



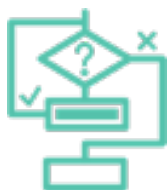
### ESSENTIAL 5 Design and enhance educational experiences

Educators apply learnings to the design or enhancement of curriculum, instruction, and assessments.

#### Sample Activities

- Develop or modify a curricular unit with their team to fortify language supports during group activities.
- Enhance instruction (e.g. scaffolded activities, lessons, units) to leverage the strengths and meet the needs of their students.
- Select and modify (where needed) assessments that provide educators with multiple sources of student evidence (e.g. transcripts of student to student conversations).

## Think Systemically



### ESSENTIAL 6

Develop the systemic conditions that support English learners

Participants improve their systems' support of MLLs by strengthening the connections between quality instruction, inquiry-driven data, and systematic supports at the school and district levels.

### Sample Activities

- Craft definitions of key instructional terms such as “academic discourse” and “scaffolding.”
- Learn about instructional frameworks that provide all educators in the district with a structure of how instruction should be organized (e.g. Three Moments in a Lesson, Teaching and Learning Cycle).
- Identify additional data requests (e.g. percent of Long Term MLLs with disabilities, percent of MLLs taking advanced math sequence) to determine inequities in the system.
- Investigate policies that may be inadvertently leading to worse educational outcomes for MLLs (e.g. higher dropout rates, lower rates of four-year college qualification).

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Organized by PD Essential

# Essential 1: Know Your Students

## Student Linguistic and Academic Diversity

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# Essential 1: Know Your Students

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# Essential 2: Apply Research to Practice

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# Essential 3: Experience and Analyze Effective Instruction

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# Essential 4: Design and Enhance Educational Experience

## Enhancement or Scaffolding of Instruction, Curriculum, and/or Content

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# Essential 5: Respond to Student Evidence

## Using Classroom Data

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