

The Delaware Design *for High-Quality* *Multilingual Learner* *Education*

Revised 3/2025

Introduction

Delaware is home to more than 990,000 people. In the 2023-2024 school year, there were **141, 279** students enrolled in Delaware’s K–12 public schools. Of these students, more than 13% (**18, 778** students) were identified as multilingual learners (MLLs), meaning they were learning English as an additional language in school at the same time that they were learning academic content. Delaware’s MLL population is higher than the national average where multilingual learners make up roughly 10% of the K–12 population. Like many other states, and the country as a whole, Delaware’s multilingual learner population has grown considerably (by over 400%) in the last 20 years.

Our Vision

Empowering Delaware’s multilingual learners to thrive through high-quality education and honoring of their cultural and linguistic assets.

Our Mission

The Delaware Department of Education Multilingual Learner Department is committed to providing equitable access to a nurturing, supportive, high-quality learning environment by fostering agency for all students to thrive. We advocate for multiculturalism, multilingual learning, and language-friendly schools, empowering diverse voices and strengthening our community and state.

Our Purpose

The *Delaware Multilingual Learners Strategic Plan 2028* outlines an ambitious plan, committed to empowering every multilingual learner to be successful in college, career, and life. To achieve this vision, the Delaware Department of Education has developed guidance tools to support educators as participants in continuous improvement practices focused on high-quality instruction for MLLs. The guiding principles and corresponding components articulate the instructional shifts and evidence-based practices that support learners’ engagement to meet the rigor of today’s classrooms. These principles anchor the work and support Delaware educators to meet the expectations of *Delaware’s Multilingual Learner Strategic Plan 2028*.

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All Educators. Every Learning Environment. All Day. Every Day.

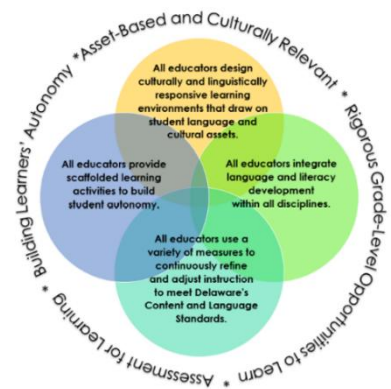
Delaware's Content Standards, including the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English Language Arts and Mathematics as well as the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), require that multilingual learners meet rigorous, grade level academic standards. **Delaware's Guiding Principles for High-Quality Multilingual Learner Education** (Guiding Principles) are meant to guide all Delaware educators as they work to develop Delaware content standards-aligned instruction for MLLs. These principles are applicable to all levels and disciplines of instruction regardless of grade, proficiency level, or program type. No single principle should be considered more important than any other. All of these principles should be incorporated into the planning and delivery of every lesson by all educators, across every learning environment, all day, every day. These principles are essential in making Delaware's vision come to fruition.

Our Research

The Delaware Department of Education has delved into the most current research around high-quality instruction for multilingual learners. These research findings were used to draft Delaware's Guiding Principles to inform the design and implementation of high-quality instruction for multilingual learners. Delaware's guidance provides all educators with clear descriptions and a coherent direction to partner within and across disciplines to strengthen the instructional core and ensure all MLLs are provided a high-quality education.

Delaware's Guiding Principles

Delaware's Guiding Principles encompass a broad philosophy and describe beliefs pertaining to high-quality multilingual learner education. Through *The Delaware Design for High-Quality Multilingual Learner Education*, Delaware's Guiding Principles were developed to help educators share the responsibility for high-quality grade-level instruction. The principles guide what and how educators plan to enact high-quality instruction.



Delaware's Guiding Principles for High-Quality Multilingual Learner Education are organized into four areas with one overarching guiding principle:

All educators share the responsibility for high-quality grade-level instruction that will prepare multilingual learners to succeed in college, career, and life.

Asset-based and Culturally Relevant

All educators design culturally and linguistically responsive learning environments that draw on student language and cultural assets.

Rigorous Grade-Level Opportunities to Learn

All educators integrate language and literacy development within all disciplines.

Assessment for Learning

All educators use a variety of measures to continuously refine and adjust instruction to meet Delaware's Content and Language Standards.

Building Learners' Autonomy

All educators provide scaffolded learning activities to build student autonomy.

Components and Instructional Shifts

All multilingual learner instruction in Delaware is anchored in research-informed components for high-quality instruction. *The Delaware Design for High-Quality Multilingual Learner Education* makes explicit what must be considered in the design and delivery of instruction to afford multilingual learners high-quality learning opportunities, every day, in every classroom. It is grounded in research about how our community of educators will develop and deliver language, literacy, and learning in all subject matters for MLLs throughout our state. *The*

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Delaware Design will help educators provide multilingual learners with more powerful learning experiences through disciplinary teaching that simultaneously develops grade-level concepts, academic practices, and the language required to do so. By implementing a coherent *Delaware Design for High-Quality Multilingual Learner Education*, we affirm that *how* language development is conceptualized influences how learning experiences are designed and delivered.

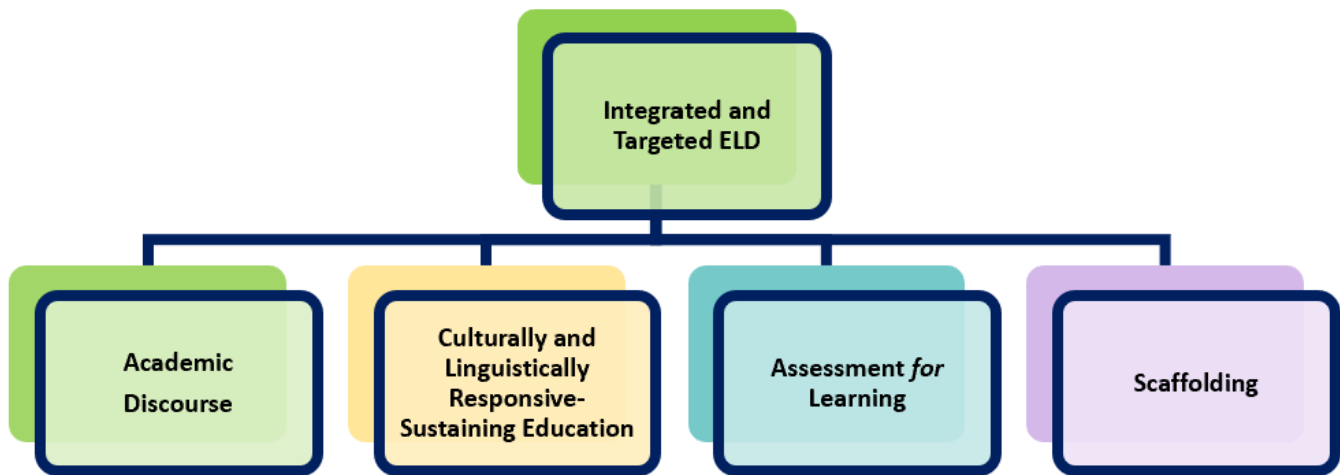
Components of *The Delaware Design for High-Quality Multilingual Learner Education* state how schools will develop language, literacy, and learning in all subject matters and how schools will address MLLs' full access and success in standards-aligned curriculum and instruction in all grades.

The goal of *The Delaware Design for High-Quality Multilingual Learner Education* is to provide multilingual learners with challenging, high-quality, rigorous, grade-level standards-based instruction that engages, empowers, and inspires learning every day. This instruction must be coherent throughout the K–12 system and anchored in **Delaware's Vision for Multilingual Learners** and **Delaware's Guiding Principles for High-Quality Multilingual Learner Education**. *The Delaware Design* calls for learners to have ample opportunities to simultaneously develop core content area knowledge, analytical practices, and discipline-specific academic uses of language. *The Delaware Design* demands that rigorous grade-level expectations are supported with research-informed strategies, such as an assets-based mindset, the use of assessment for learning, and deliberate and appropriate scaffolds. Instruction in Delaware classrooms builds on learners' cultural and linguistic assets and connects their prior knowledge to new learning. *The Delaware Design* supports the development of learners' autonomy by affording multiple and varied opportunities to engage in academic discourse regularly and to comprehend and use language for a variety of purposes.

The implementation of *The Delaware Design for High-Quality Multilingual Learner Education* provides a focus on meaning making and interactive, collaborative communication for a variety of purposes, with the goal of having learners express understanding of academic content and academic concepts. Learners must be actively using and applying complex language in extended, purposeful oral and written exchanges around meaningful ideas in every classroom, every day. This means that all learners—including MLLs at *all* English language proficiency levels—must have opportunities to participate in discussions with each other and their monolingual peers, using discipline-specific language. Learners must engage in analytical practices of different academic disciplines such as describing, explaining, problem solving, arguing, and drawing inferences. The learning of English, by multilingual learners, should not happen in isolation, but must be embedded in these academic interactions to ensure both language and content learning happen simultaneously.

Components of High-Quality Instruction

The Delaware Design for High-Quality Multilingual Learner Education begins with the Guiding Principles, which were built on the vision and mission of the Delaware Department of Education and the goals of Delaware’s Multilingual Learner Strategic Plan 2028. The Delaware Design also provides six components of high-quality instruction. The components state how we will develop language, literacy, and learning in all subject matters and how we will address MLL’s full access and success in standards-aligned curriculum and instruction in all grades. English Language Development (ELD) is a shared responsibility of all Delaware educators, across every learning environment.



Rigorous Grade-Level Opportunities to Learn: All educators integrate language and literacy development within all disciplines.

Asset-based and Culturally Relevant: All educators design culturally and linguistically responsive learning environments that draw on student language and cultural assets.

Assessment for Learning: All educators use a variety of measures to continuously refine and adjust instruction to meet the Delaware’s Content and Language Standards.

Building Learners’ Autonomy: All educators provide scaffolded learning activities to build student autonomy.

English Language Development

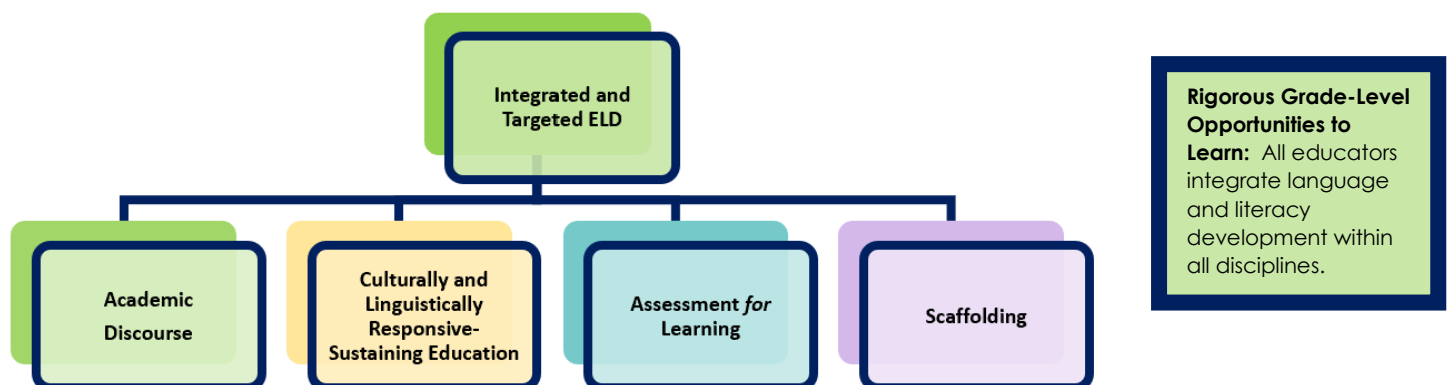
Integrated and Targeted English Language Development is the first component, and they provide Delaware educators with a foundation for language development that happens throughout the day and across the disciplines. Situated within Integrated and Targeted English Language Development, Delaware’s remaining components of high-quality multilingual learner instruction include academic discourse, culturally and linguistically responsive-sustaining education, assessment *for* learning, and scaffolding. Through *The Delaware Design*, each component is defined and includes learning indicators to help Delaware educators understand what each component “looks” like in today’s classrooms. In addition, ongoing professional learning sessions will be provided to support implementation of these components in every classroom.

Integrated English Language Development

The term Integrated English Language Development (ELD) refers to ELD that occurs throughout the day and across the disciplines. It is the foundation of all learning for multilingual learners and is therefore a shared responsibility and priority for all educators in every district, every school, and every learning environment. To ensure high-quality teaching for MLLs, instruction must simultaneously develop content-area conceptual understandings, analytical practices, and the language needed to engage in both. All educators should use the WIDA ELD Standards and resources in addition to their Delaware academic content standards to plan for, support, and monitor academic progress. Integrated ELD promotes language as a valuable resource that helps learners make meaning and demonstrate knowledge of content through oral presentations, collaborative conversations, and writing to develop proficiency. Integrated ELD includes engaging learners in activities where listening, reading, speaking, and writing help all MLLs develop disciplinary language and analytical practices that strengthen their independence to use language for diverse tasks, purposes, audiences, and text types. It is also inclusive and leverages learners’ linguistic and cultural resources as valuable assets for learning. By planning for simultaneous language and content development every day in every learning environment, educators will provide MLLs access to, models of, and practice in the use of academic language needed to meet rigorous academic standards that prepare them for college, careers, and life.

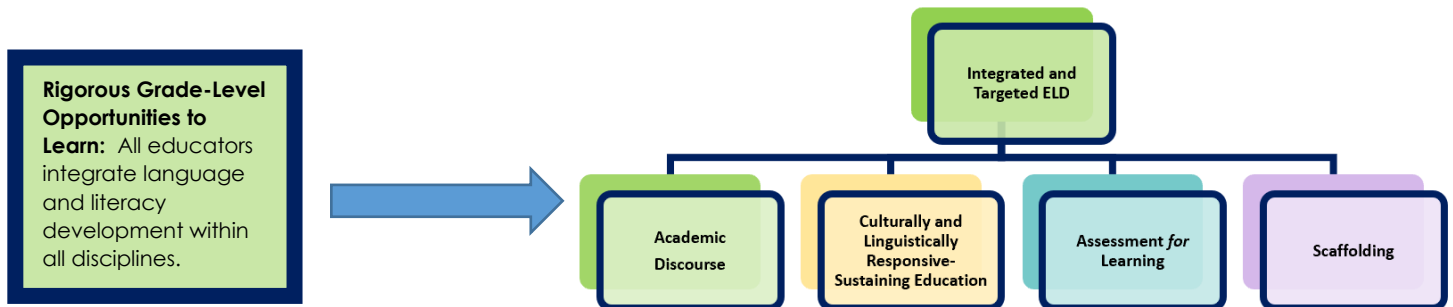
Targeted English Language Development

The term Targeted English Language Development (ELD) refers to ELD that amplifies how language works and builds learners' ability to use sophisticated written and spoken English to participate fully and independently in academic settings. It builds on Integrated ELD and occurs throughout the day and across the disciplines in every learning environment. Targeted ELD consists of planned instruction, contingent supports, and daily practices that are responsive to student needs, with an emphasis on the language needed to engage with rigorous standards-aligned content and participate in disciplinary practices. It should not be viewed as separate and isolated from any of the content areas. It is an opportunity to support MLLs to develop the discourse practices, including understanding text purpose, structure, and language features needed to successfully and equitably participate in all content areas and across all language domains (listening, reading, writing, and speaking). Instruction is planned using the WIDA ELD Standards to emphasize practice and progression with Delaware content standards towards full participation and autonomy in academic settings. During instruction, MLLs should be actively engaged in well-planned collaborative discussions that invite educators and peers to observe, monitor, and give feedback on each learner's use of academic language. Targeted ELD strengthens the practice and use of transferable academic language to all settings. The content of Targeted ELD must be grade-level appropriate and rigorous since it is not possible to develop advanced levels of English by using texts and tasks that are devoid of the language of academic content topics. Targeted ELD strengthens the practice and use of cross-cutting disciplinary language in ways that are closely aligned with the rigorous tasks and rich texts used in the content areas. Targeted ELD zeros in on the language practices needed to enhance MLLs performance in Integrated ELD.



Academic Discourse

Academic discourse engages learners in reciprocal and sustained quality interactions around complex texts and topics. It involves learners' use of precise language for disciplinary-specific analytical practices. Academic discourse is not simply about building language. Basic social instructional language is not sufficient to move learners towards academic success. Explicitly targeting academic discourse is crucial to helping learners enhance both their content knowledge, practice with academic register and disciplinary language. Learners must be provided structured opportunities to engage in academic discourse, while also practicing the language central to understanding that content, as they continue to build their academic language proficiency. Learners must draw upon their language resources, including their home language and with peers, to negotiate meaning and build English proficiency. These opportunities not only assist learners in building content knowledge, but also the metalinguistic awareness that encourages learners to understand, reflect upon, and refine their language use. Learners must be empowered to take risks with language and be continuously engaged in extended opportunities to use language for meaning making. Daily rigorous, standards-aligned academic discourse stretches learners beyond their comfort zone to foster autonomy.

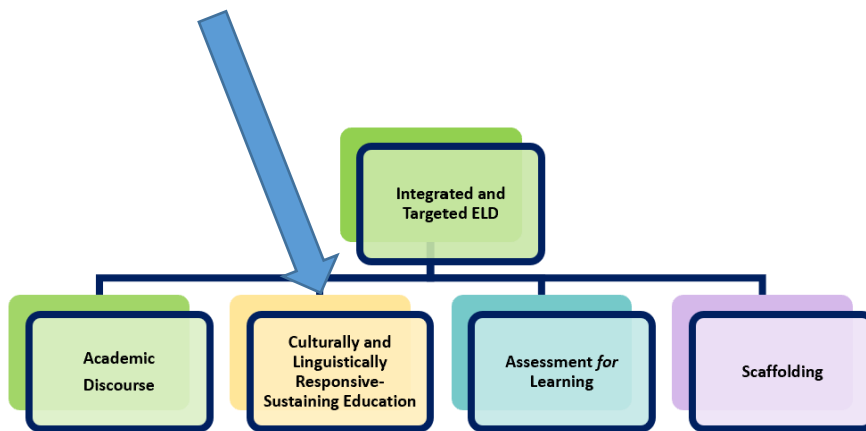


Culturally and Linguistically Responsive-Sustaining Education

Culturally and linguistically responsive-sustaining education is an active evolving journey that Delaware schools undertake to cross philosophical barriers towards thoughtful and reflective school change. This systemic change creates and sustains learning environments where all learners realize their full educational potential and are empowered to navigate an increasingly diverse society and global economy. Culturally and linguistically responsive education is not simply the acknowledgement of culture alone, but it is a deep understanding of the dimensions of diversity beyond race, ethnicity, and gender. Culturally and linguistically responsive practices call upon educators to critically examine their instructional philosophy and transcend their own cultural and linguistic biases.

Culturally and linguistically responsive educators design classroom cultures along with their learners that reflect their diverse backgrounds. Instruction must be carefully planned and explicitly delivered to provide purposeful interactions so that learners feel comfortable exploring differences of opinion, drawing on the resources of the classroom community, and thrive as agents of change in our diverse world.

Culturally responsive educators draw on the diverse backgrounds of learners, families, and the community to link what they are teaching to the everyday lives of our learners. Educators must work closely with families to develop complementary educational expectations in order to achieve the full educational potential of each learner. To truly recognize Delaware's vision and commitment to empowering every multilingual learner to be successful in college, career and life, it is the responsibility of Delaware's educators to embrace an assets-based mindset and to build upon the richness of diversity within our learning environments.



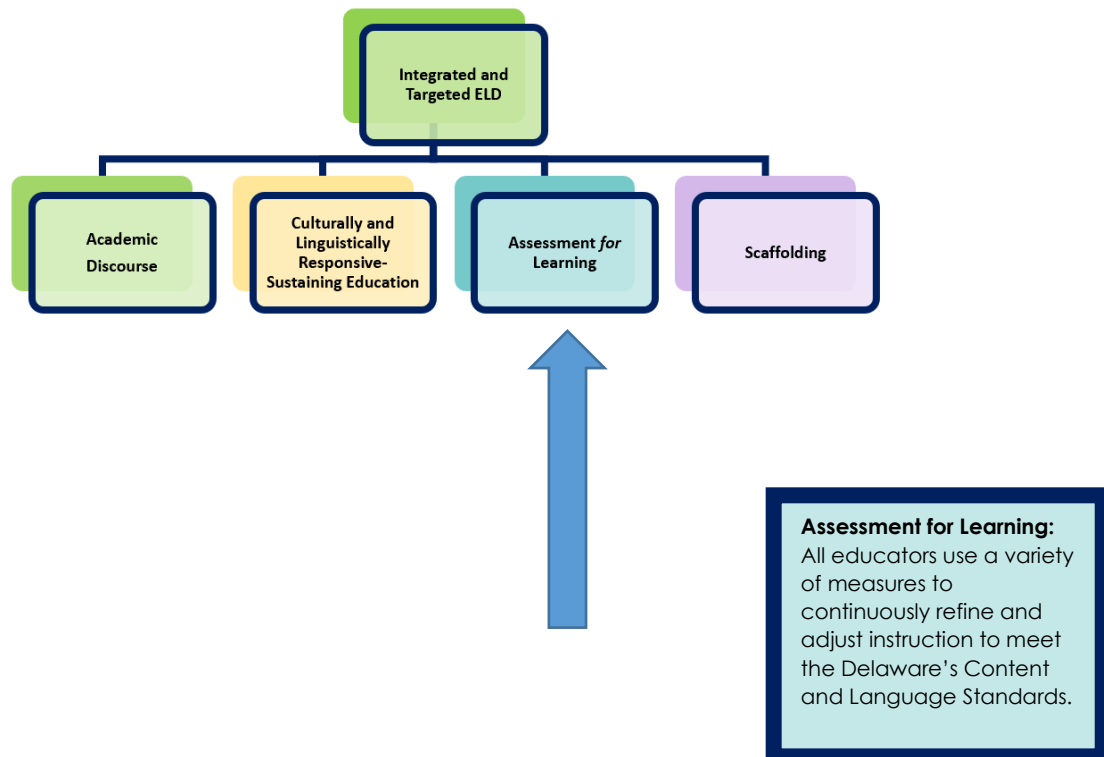
Asset-based and Culturally Relevant:

All educators design culturally and linguistically responsive learning environments that draw on student language and cultural assets.

Assessment *for* Learning

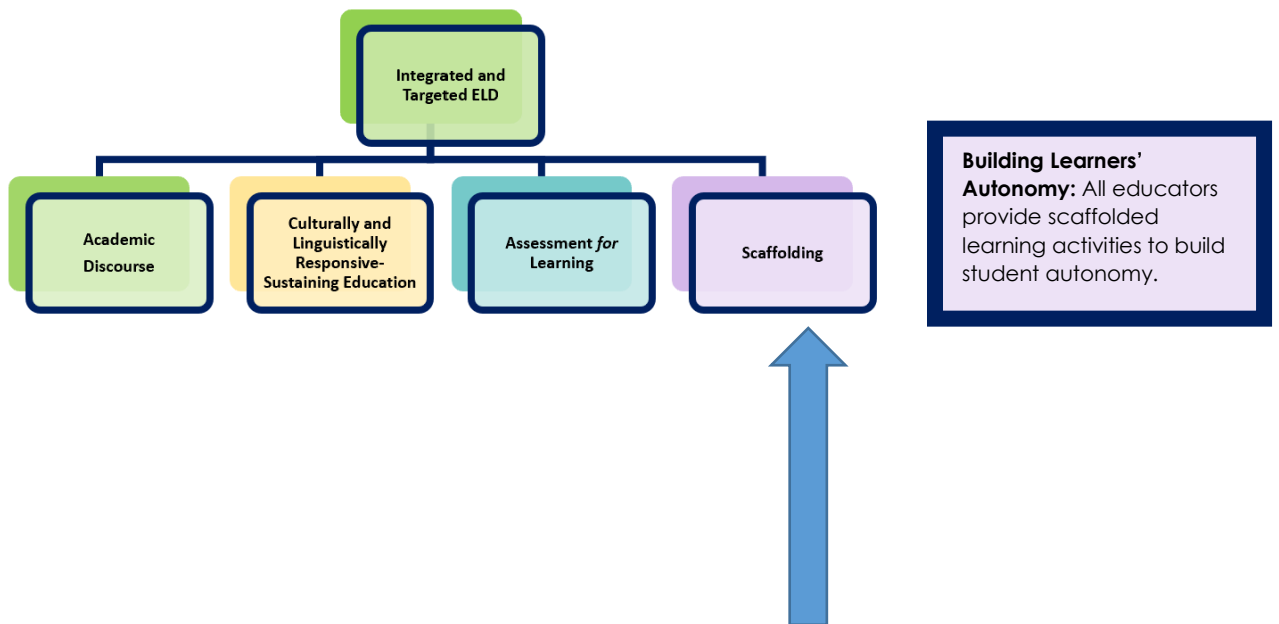
Assessment, instruction, and learning are inextricably linked, informing student learning and progress toward grade-level language and content standards. Gathering and synthesizing multiple sources of information from learners helps to focus instruction while providing flexibility to meet the needs of individual learners or groups of learners. Ongoing and intentional assessment allows educators to take learners from where they are and lead them to higher levels of understanding.

Language allows for learners to demonstrate their understanding of content. Assessment for learning uses multiple indicators to measure learner's language and content proficiency. Frequent and close observation allows educators to more precisely define where learners are on their continuum of learning aligned to the standards. Effective assessment for learning is the careful collection and analysis of both data and authentic evidence to inform instructional decisions and appropriate scaffolding toward content and language targets. Assessment for learning uses timely feedback to accelerate progress within all disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening. What matters most is not the form of the assessment, but how the information gathered is used to increase effective instruction and learning.



Scaffolding

Scaffolding is a temporary support designed to facilitate complex language, literacy, and content development that a learner is not able to do independently yet. Scaffolds occur on multiple levels and target not only content, literacy, and language but also structures and processes. There are two types of scaffolding: planned and just-in-time. Planned scaffolding is designed for purposeful learning and production. It requires knowledge of individual student needs and assets, as well as deep understanding of the conceptual content being targeted, including the uses of language necessary to understand and produce that content. Just-in-time scaffolds are contingent upon the reaction of the learner. Scaffolding does not simplify content, reduce a student's workload, or last forever. Both types of scaffolding are designed to support learners' perseverance, motivation, and engagement with rigorous content, tasks, and text on their way towards building independence.



Standards' Aligned Instruction

A high-quality education is anchored in the Guiding Principles and standards-aligned instruction. Instruction for MLLs is aligned to the teaching and learning expectations reflected in both Delaware Content Standards and the ELD Standards (WIDA). MLLs must develop conceptual knowledge in a subject area, engage in subject-specific analytical practices, and gain proficiency-related language uses simultaneously. This means that instruction in English language development is not separate from content learning. In fact, the ELD Standards explicitly focus on using language in school to engage in academic discourse and communicate the information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in subject-area learning, as reflected in the figure below.

Standard		Abbreviation
ELD Standard 1	English language learners communicate for social and instructional purposes within the school setting	Social and Instructional language
ELD Standard 2	English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of language arts	The language of Language Arts
ELD Standard 3	English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of mathematics	The language of Mathematics
ELD Standard 4	English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of science	The language of Science
ELD Standard 5	English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of social studies	The language of Social Studies

Source: English Language Development (ELD) Standards (WIDA) (2017)

Instructional Practices

Certain instructional practices need to be in place to support Delaware's Guiding Principles for High-Quality English Multilingual Learner Education and ensure content and language development standards are addressed simultaneously. Four of these key practices are summarized below.

All educators...

Accept responsibility for teaching Multilingual learners.

Language and content learning cannot be separated. Each content area or discipline has specific ways of using language to reason or develop arguments, to explain ideas and cite evidence, to comprehend, and produce texts that communicate conceptual understanding. Educators need to apprentice multilingual learners into these practices by ensuring they are actively engaged in authentic learning opportunities in all content areas.

Engage learners in academic discourses that require use of language in sustained, content-specific ways.

Multilingual learners need multiple opportunities to participate in interactions with educators and peers that require sustained uses of language specific to particular disciplines to communicate understanding, negotiate meaning, and collaborate in the development and presentations of meaningful products.

Engage learners in well-scaffolded learning opportunities to simultaneously learn content and language.

Lessons include support for multilingual learners to engage in rigorous content learning that is beyond what learners can accomplish on their own. Educators provide learners with language models for engaging in sustained content-based interactions and co-construction of knowledge. Educators purposefully select and sequence activities so that MLLs can participate fully in grade-level learning. Lesson activities develop knowledge and practices that can be applied in novel applications and move learners toward autonomy through metacognitive development.

Empower learners to draw on prior knowledge as well as cultural and linguistic assets.

Lessons include support for multilingual learners to use a wealth of resources in rigorous content learning that connects new learning to prior knowledge. Lessons are designed to invite academic discourse, cultural connections, and home language use through collaborations. The classroom environment and lessons provide learners with grade-level complex texts and resources in English and their home languages, as well as time to process and engage in productive struggle while learning in disciplinary areas.

Conclusion

These principles and corresponding components of high-quality instruction for MLLs are based on educational peer reviewed research publications, evidence-based practices, and recommendations. In developing these principles and components, the MLL Leadership team at the Delaware Department of Education, in partnership with WestEd, drew directly from theory, research, and professional knowledge related to the education of MLLs. These principles explicitly reference the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects; the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics; the Framework for K–12 Science Education: Practices, Cross-cutting Concepts, and Core Ideas; and the WIDA Standards for English Language Development and Framework.

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