

**9:00–9:15**

Introductions

Local Leadership

**9:15–9:30**

Greetings from  
NYSED

Associate Commissioner Elisa Alvarez  
Deputy Commissioner Angelique Johnson-Dingle  
Regent Aramina Vega Ferrer, Ph.D.

**9:30–10:35**

Briefs 1–3

Dr. Socorro Herrera

**10:35–10:45**

**Break**

**10:45–11:00**

Greetings

Chancellor Lester Young, Jr.

**11:00–11:45**

Deep Dive  
Assets Based  
Activity

Local Facilitation

**11:45–12:00**

Share Out

Local groups share with full conference

**12:00–12:45**

**Lunch**

**12:45–1:45**

Briefs 4–6

Dr. Socorro Herrera

**1:45–1:55**

**Break**

**1:55–2:40**

Deep Dive  
Data Leadership

Local Facilitation

**2:40–2:55**

Share Out

Local groups share with full conference

**2:55–3:00**

Closing Remarks

Associate Commissioner Elisa Alvarez



# Expanding the Scope of Reading to Include Multilingual Learners

Created for the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) at the New York State Education Department (NYSED) by Kathy Escamilla, Ph.D.

## Abstract

In 2023-2024, English Language Learners (ELLs) comprised 10% of K–12 students nationwide and 11% in New York State. This diverse and growing population includes both U.S.-born multilingual students (estimated at 85%) and those who are new arrivals.

While the Science of Reading (SoR) has come to inform literacy instruction policies in the U.S., additional consideration of the process of second language acquisition and issues that come with bilingualism is necessary. Many studies do not fully address the needs of ELLs and other multilingual learners (MLs), and this significant population’s needs should be addressed. This brief advocates for expanding the studies to include research-based practices that support bilingualism, biliteracy, and culturally responsive pedagogy. It also highlights the ontological differences between multilingual and monolingual learners, and argues that addressing these distinctions is essential to ensuring equitable and effective literacy instruction.

## Understanding the Bilingual Brain

Being bilingual is different than being monolingual because the two languages interact linguistically, psychologically, culturally, cognitively and emotionally within a student’s brain. Our challenge as educators is to view these differences as assets.



### on·to·log·i·cal (adjective)

1. Relating to ontology, the philosophical study of being. It is the study of existence and the structure of reality.
2. Describes a set of concepts and categories within a subject area that shows the properties and relations between them.

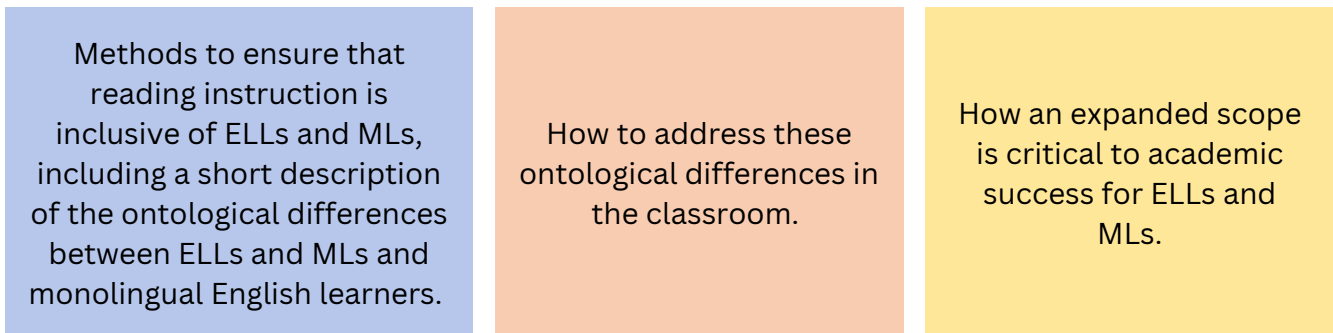
### English Language Learner (ELL)

An ELL is a student who speaks or understands language(s) other than English, is developing English language skills, and who scores below a State-designated level of proficiency on the English Language Proficiency Assessment.

### Multilingual Learner (ML)

Multilingual Learner refers to all students who speak or are learning one or more language(s) other than English, including current ELLs, former (exited) ELLs, students who were never ELLs but are heritage speakers of a language other than English, and World Languages students.

This brief addresses:



## A Look Inside a Literacy Lesson

Ms. Cunningham is teaching her first grade class a lesson in phonological awareness. The class is learning how phonemes combine to make words that have meaning. This lesson is from a reading program her school uses, and she believes it is a good way to help all students learn to read. But even though the lesson may work for native English speakers, it doesn't fully support students who are learning English as a new language.

For example, when Ms. Cunningham says, "Let's clap the number of sounds we hear in the word *sofa*," ELLs might not understand that she wants them to clap for each sound, not each syllable. This is confusing for students who are used to learning in another language, like Spanish, where words are often broken into syllables. Also, the students need to know what a *sofa* is, that it may also be called a *couch*. They need to understand what *clap* means, and how to count the sounds in English. Without pictures or explanations in their first language, ELLs may not fully understand the lesson.

## Strategies for Success

- Build background knowledge
- Provide visuals
- Leverage cognates
- Choose materials that reflect your students
- Make connections to students' home languages

## Conclusions

- The teaching of foundational skills is important, but it should not be the sole focus of reading instruction for ELLs and MLs.
- Research has shown that ELLs and MLs attain decoding skills at comparable levels to their monolingual peers, but lag behind in comprehension and writing. This points to the need for an approach to help students acquire vocabulary and background knowledge to make meaning from what they are reading.
- An expanded literacy experience benefits ALL learners, not just ELLs.

## Reflect and Apply

- Am I unintentionally relying on monolingual assumptions in my literacy instruction?
- How can I better leverage the home languages and cultural backgrounds of my ML students?
- How might I adapt materials and assessments to be more linguistically and culturally accessible?

# Teaching Reading in Multilingual Classrooms: Moving Beyond a Deficit Perspective

Created for the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) at the New York State Education Department (NYSED) by Socorro G. Herrera, Ed.D.

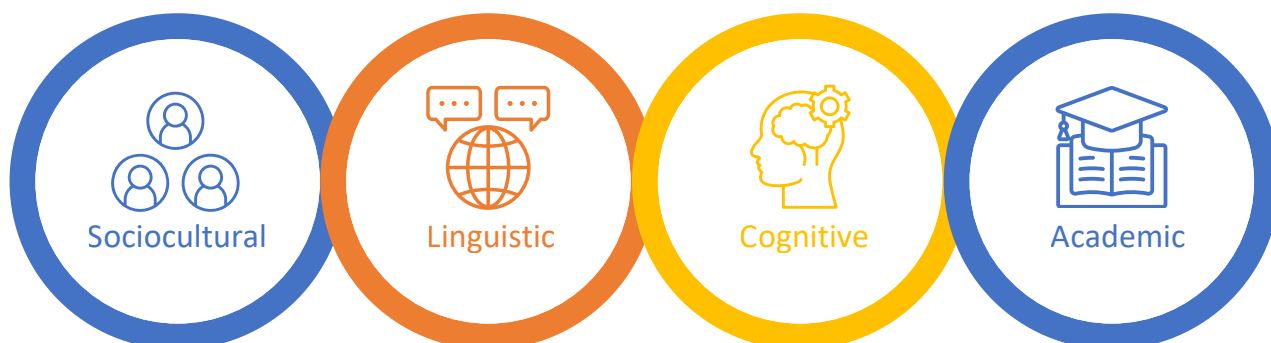
This brief addresses the critical importance of shifting from a deficit perspective to an asset-based approach in teaching reading to English Language Learners (ELLs) and Multilingual Learners (MLs). It emphasizes that an educator's understanding of a student's biography — encompassing sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic dimensions — is crucial for effective literacy development. The brief highlights how a narrow view of literacy, often exacerbated by standardized testing not designed for multilingual learners, can overlook students' existing linguistic assets from their home languages (L1) and lead to inappropriate interventions. It argues that recognizing and leveraging these L1 assets can significantly accelerate literacy development in English (L2) by building on established language-processing pathways. The brief also suggests alternative assessment methods, such as observing language use in various contexts and collaborating with families, to gain a more accurate understanding of a student's linguistic capabilities. Ultimately, it advocates for instructional practices and interventions that are guided by the student's unique multilingual biography, ensuring that all students have equitable access to robust literacy growth and academic achievement.

## The Student Biography

A learner's biography creates a picture of the whole child. When more than one language is involved, it is important to know how, when, and where each language is used, and how proficient the student is in each, both receptively and expressively.

## Early Language Matters

Children begin developing literacy well before school, through early exposure to language, songs, and stories in the home. Recognizing and building on this foundation is essential, especially for students learning to read in a language different from their first.



## Key Questions on Fundamental Aspects of Language

- What are the similarities and differences between English and L1?
- How can educators use these similarities or differences to bridge skills and knowledge?
- How can knowledge of the differences between L1 and L2 help with literacy instruction?
- How can educators identify literacy skills and needs through observation of the student's use of familiar L1 and/or L2 words?
- How can educators consider all dimensions of the student biography and other factors that might be impacting perceived performance?
- How well does the student learn new routines, chores, and expectations at home?
- How can educators partner with the parent(s)/family to build connections and/or make content relevant to students?

### Use Assessments with Caution

Overreliance on standardized tests and narrow literacy screeners can misrepresent ELLs' and MLs' abilities, leading to incorrect placement and limiting opportunities for higher-order learning. Instead, dynamic assessments and family input should be used to better understand students' true capabilities.

### Family Partnerships

Strong, respectful collaboration with families goes beyond sending home translated materials. It involves gathering insights about language use, literacy practices, and daily life to inform instruction and affirm the students' identities and experiences.

### Conclusions

To foster real literacy development among ELLs and MLs, educators must adopt a broader, more inclusive perspective that values student assets over deficits, community knowledge over assumptions, and home language as a resource rather than an obstacle. This approach not only supports language development but also promotes equity, engagement, and academic achievement for all learners.

### Reflect and Apply

As educators plan and deliver reading instruction, the road map they use takes into consideration the terrain and conditions for the individual learner. Teachers who understand the language systems of L1 use this knowledge to advance the learning of their ELLs and MLs.

- How are every child's language assets documented and used to advance/accelerate learning to read? How do such assets support or provide a lens on how to best advance and meet the needs of the learner?
- What considerations connected to the sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic dimensions of the learner might inform your instruction, interventions, and strategies to support students to make cross-linguistic connections?

# Literacy Development of Emergent Multilingual Learners in the Early Childhood Classroom

Created for the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) at the New York State Education Department (NYSED) by Socorro G. Herrera, Ed.D.

This brief focuses on the literacy development of Emergent Multilingual Learners (EMLs) in early childhood classrooms. It aims to guide administrators and educators in recognizing and leveraging the preliteracy assets that these children bring from their home languages and cultures, which may not be evident through standard screeners. The brief emphasizes the crucial role of oral language as the first foundation of literacy, the importance of respecting a child's first language and cultural background as integral to their learning, and refutes misconceptions about bilingualism. It also addresses the limitations of standard language screeners and assessments, advocating for a more holistic approach that includes parent partnerships and considers the child's language and culture. The brief concludes with research-based practices and recommendations for supporting literacy development in early childhood for multilingual learners, highlighting the need for culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and materials.

## Questions for Collaborative Parent Engagement

1. What does a typical day look like for your child?
2. What is your child's style of play?
3. Do they interact with other children?
4. What books does your child like?
5. What would you like us to know about your child?



<b>Misconceptions Regarding Bilingualism &amp; Second Language Acquisition in Very Young Children</b>	“Young children pick up a second language very quickly”
	“More English is better”
	“Bilingualism confuses children”
	“Bilingualism leads to weak skills in both languages”

## Bridges to Literacy

A child's first language (L1) is deeply tied to their identity and plays a vital role in how they make sense of the world. Despite common myths that bilingualism causes confusion or slows down learning, research consistently shows that supporting a child's L1 actually enhances their cognitive, academic, and social-emotional development and provides a strong foundation for learning English (L2). When schools overlook or diminish a child's L1, it can lead to the loss of cultural ties, disrupt family communication, and hinder academic growth. To truly support literacy development, educators must recognize families as essential partners who bring valuable insights into their children's strengths and needs. By building trusting, culturally responsive relationships with families, schools can create meaningful pathways that honor and integrate children's full linguistic and cultural identities into their literacy journey.

### Research Based Practices for Early Childhood Literacy Instruction

- Adopt a comprehensive literacy approach for dual language learners that is grounded in research and theory in second language acquisition and biliteracy.
- Ensure that early childhood pre-literacy practices are developmentally appropriate and focused on the precursors to literacy, not on explicit reading skills.
- Follow a curriculum that is culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate.
- Utilize materials that reflect the languages and cultures of the students.
- Ensure access to books in both English and the home language.
- Differentiate based on the language proficiency levels.
- Value the home language and literacy practices as assets to be included in classroom instruction.

### Limitations of the Standard Language Screeners and Assessments

Standard developmental screeners are often designed with monolingual, Western cultural norms in mind, which can lead to an inaccurate representation of Emergent Multilingual Learners' (EMLs) true abilities. When educators rely too heavily on these screeners without considering a child's linguistic and cultural background, students may be mistakenly labeled as "at risk" or inappropriately referred for special education services. To address this, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) has developed the Emergent Multilingual Learners (EML) Protocol, which provides educators with strategies for more accurate identification and support of multilingual learners. It emphasizes the importance of using multiple forms of assessment—such as observation, dynamic assessment, and input from families—to create a more complete and equitable understanding of a child's development and potential.

## Reflect and Apply

- How can early childhood educators understand, acknowledge, and access the individual foundational literacy skills that the youngest students already bring with them to school?
- What parent partnerships exist in your setting?
- How can these partnerships be utilized?
- What can families add to guide instruction, screening, and evaluations that cannot be gathered from traditional screenings/evaluation tools?
- How can standard language screeners and assessments be used in non-discriminatory ways?
- What can you incorporate in your teaching practice to get a fuller picture of your students' ability to learn, beyond just using traditional data like test scores or grades?

# The Science of Reading in Dual Language Immersion Classrooms

Created for the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) at the New York State Education Department (NYSED) by Kathy Escamilla, Ph.D.

This brief defines biliteracy development within Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs, emphasizing that biliteracy is more complex than monoliteracy. It outlines the three guiding principles of DLI: bilingualism and biliteracy, high academic achievement, and sociocultural competence. The brief differentiates between effective DLI programs and monolingual English literacy programs, highlighting essential components for DLI, including English Language Development, Metalinguistic Development, and Cross-Language Connections, in addition to foundational literacy skills and writing. It addresses the challenge of time in DLI classrooms and proposes a Comprehensive Biliteracy Framework that promotes integration and coordination across languages, rather than duplication of instruction. The brief provides examples of how to teach foundational skills and connect language environments efficiently by leveraging similarities and differences between languages, ultimately advocating for a holistic and integrated approach to biliteracy instruction.



## Essential Components for Literacy Instruction for Monolingual English Literacy Programs and for DLI Programs for ELLs and MLs

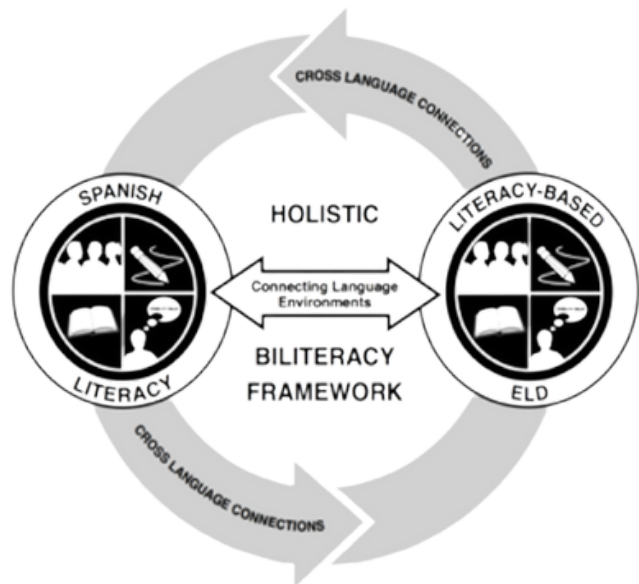
Monolingual English Components			
Oral Language / Oracy	Reading Foundational Skills*	Writing	Social Justice Teaching
Additional Components for Non-English Language and English as a New Language			
English Language Development	Metalinguistic Development	Cross-Language Connections	

\*Reading Foundational Skills include phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and oral language.

**Essential Components for Literacy Instruction**

English Language Development	Metalinguistic Development	Cross-Language Connections
refers to instruction that emphasizes English language acquisition.	refers to the ability to understand and analyze language structure including phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. In short, metalinguistic development is the knowledge of how language works. DLI programs students need to develop metalinguistic awareness within each language and across both languages.	are the act of comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences between languages.

One model that demonstrates a **Comprehensive Biliteracy Framework** (Escamilla et.al., 2014) that illustrates how integration can occur in DLI programs is presented below. The side-by-side circles represent the Spanish and English literacy components of oracy (the talking heads), reading (the book), writing (the pencil), and metalinguistic development (the idea bubble). The Spanish and English circles are encircled by arrows representing cross-language connections and the arrows in the center represent connecting language environments. This visual represents the ways in which literacy teaching can be integrated and connected.



Comprehensive Biliteracy Framework (Escamilla et.al., 2014)

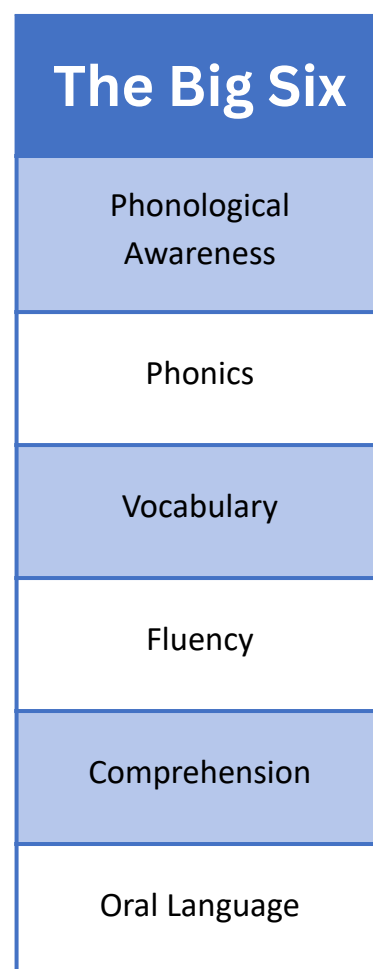
**Reflect and Apply**

- How is teaching literacy in a DLI classroom similar and different from the Science of Reading for monolingual English programs?
- What strategies (other than those listed above) could be employed to ensure that your comprehensive literacy biliteracy program can be implemented in the time frame allotted in your school for literacy teaching?
- Why is it important that the Science of Reading instructional practices be aligned with the pillars of effective DLI instruction?
- Identify the specific ways that your curricular approach reflects a coordinated, and integrated teaching of biliteracy. What are your areas of strength and where do you need to develop deeper connections?
- What types of professional learning opportunity sessions are needed to insure complete implementation of DLI programs and who needs to attend these sessions?

# The Science of Reading in Multilingual K-12 Classrooms

Created for the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) at the New York State Education Department (NYSED) by Socorro G. Herrera, Ed.D. and Robin M. Cabral, Ph.D.

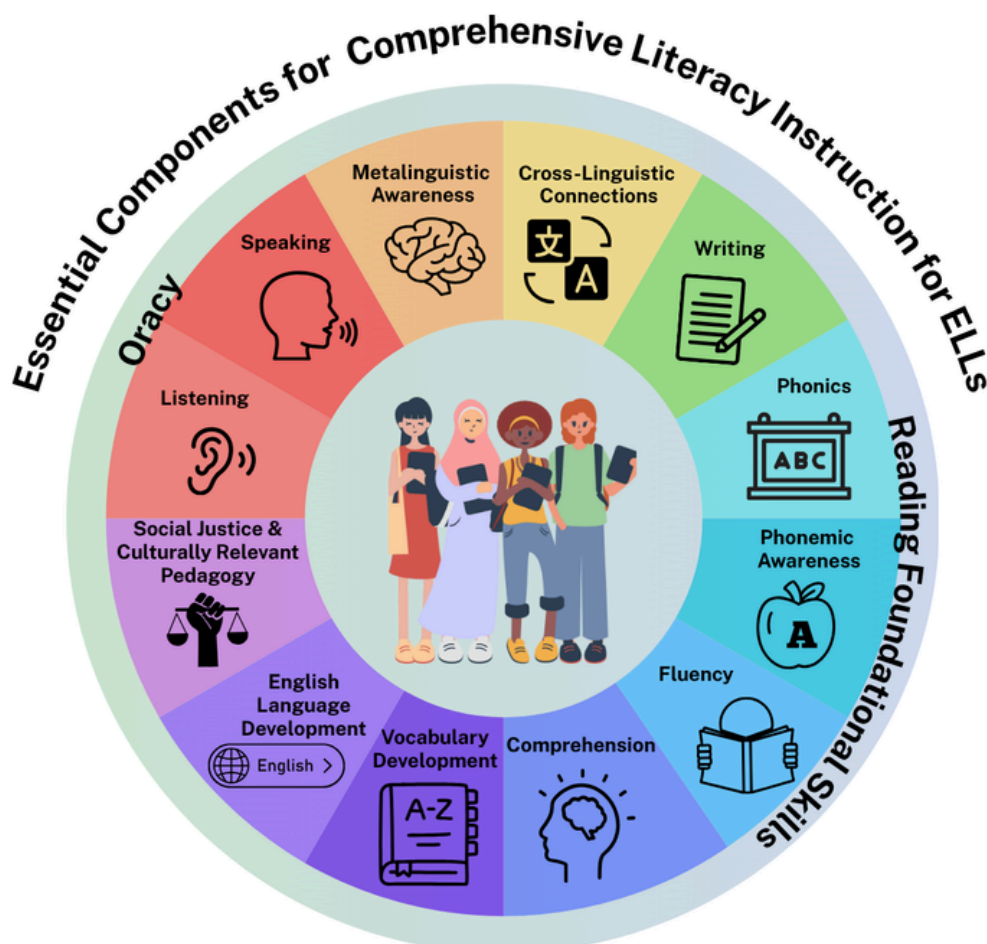
This brief examines the application of the Science of Reading (SoR) to multilingual K-12 classrooms, specifically addressing the needs of English Language Learners (ELLs) and multilingual learners (MLs). While SoR identifies common processes in reading development, the brief highlights the need for further study on how these processes uniformly apply to linguistically diverse students. It re-evaluates the “Big Six” skills and competencies (phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and oral language) in the context of ELLs and MLs, pointing out that existing curricula often fail to account for students’ unique linguistic and cultural assets. For each of the “Big Six” areas, the brief contrasts monolingual English assumptions with ELL and ML considerations, offering sample instructional strategies designed to leverage students’ prior knowledge and language assets, ensure meaningful engagement with text, and avoid common pitfalls (such as misidentification of learning disabilities or remediation that dampens language acquisition). The brief stresses the importance of integrating “learning to read” with “reading to learn” synergistically, providing case studies to illustrate the long-term impacts of differing pedagogical approaches on student outcomes. Finally, the brief advocates for programs that equitably benefit all students by recognizing and supporting their full linguistic repertoires.



Learning to Read	Reading to Learn
Students develop foundational reading skills.	Students develop the skills to acquire and assess content knowledge through increasingly complex print.

## Beyond the Big Six

The model below illustrates how teachers can move beyond the Big Six in order to make literacy instruction more inclusive of ELLs and MLs.



### Reflect and Apply

- How can screener data inform and misinform our sense of the effectiveness of literacy curricula/programs used with ELLs and MLs in our school(s)?
- Why is it particularly important for ELLs and MLs that meaning connections occur throughout all stages of learning to read?
- Discuss the pros and cons of structured instructional settings on ELL and ML students':
  - access to rich oral language models,
  - access to grade-level curricula, and
  - exposure to the vocabulary breadth and depth needed to support skilled reading.
- What does the data in my school/district indicate about our current implementation of SoR to support ELL and ML students' successful attainment of school and life goals?
- What plan does your school or district have to address teaching literacy to ELLs and MLs? Upon reflection of the information shared in this document, what, if any, changes should be made to improve support for these students?

# What Every Instructional Leader Needs to Know: Recommendations for Advancing Multiliteracy

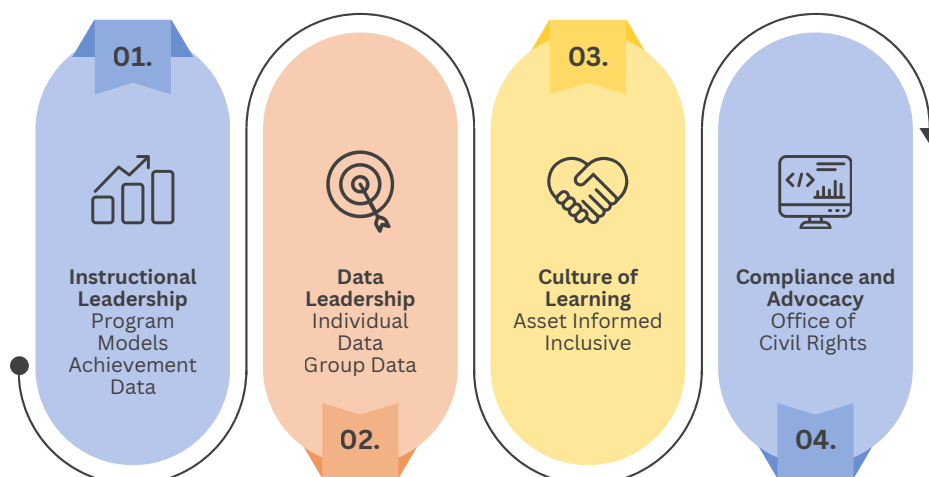
Created for the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) at the New York State Education Department (NYSED) by Socorro G. Herrera, Ed.D. and Robin M. Cabral, Ph.D.

This brief provides essential recommendations for school leaders to effectively support English Language Learners (ELLs) and multilingual learners (MLs) in advancing multiliteracy. It outlines four critical areas of educational leadership:

- **Instructional Leadership**, emphasizing research-aligned teaching practices and program models (such as Dual Language Immersion) proven to foster higher academic outcomes for ELLs
- **Data Leadership**, focusing on the contextualized use of individual and group data to inform decision-making and prevent misidentification of learning disabilities
- **Fostering a Culture of Learning** that is asset-informed, inclusive, and reflective, aligning with culturally responsive-sustaining education principles
- **Ensuring Compliance and Advocacy** with civil rights laws, particularly those enforced by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), by advocating for necessary resources and addressing systemic biases. The brief aims to guide leaders in creating supportive learning environments that lead to measurable positive outcomes for all students and staff.

## Create a Culture for Learning

School leaders should foster a school-wide culture that values learning, reflection, and diversity by embracing the principles of the New York State Education Department's Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CR-SE) Framework. This includes creating a welcoming environment where all students and families feel respected and represented, setting high expectations for every learner, implementing an inclusive curriculum that reflects students' cultures and experiences, and ensuring continuous professional learning for staff. By promoting asset-based thinking, educators shift away from deficit mindsets and instead recognize the strengths and contributions of all students. A commitment to equity helps build a school climate where every child is empowered to succeed.



Individual Data	Group Data
To what extent have the teaching methods and materials allowed this student to connect with content and skills?	What does the data reflect for each group? Grade? The entire school?
Do assessments presume sameness of life and language outside of school?	Are the chosen materials and assessments culturally responsive and appropriate for multilingual learners?
Do assumptions of <i>universality</i> impede this student from showing the depth and breadth of what they know and can do? Are accommodations provided to address this concern? Are those accommodations effective?	How is the data interpreted? Does it reinforce either negative or positive trends?



**Reflect and Apply**

- Describe the program model relied upon most for serving ELL students in your school.
  - What long term academic outcomes are correlated with this model?
  - What social, vocational, and economic outcomes could result for the students, school, and community at large?
- The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) provides guidelines to districts and schools for doing what is legally appropriate. However, we can meet the law and yet not do what is educationally sound for our culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) student populations.
  - How can educational leaders use the laws that support ELLs to advocate for the personal and material resources needed to be in compliance with the language and spirit of each law?

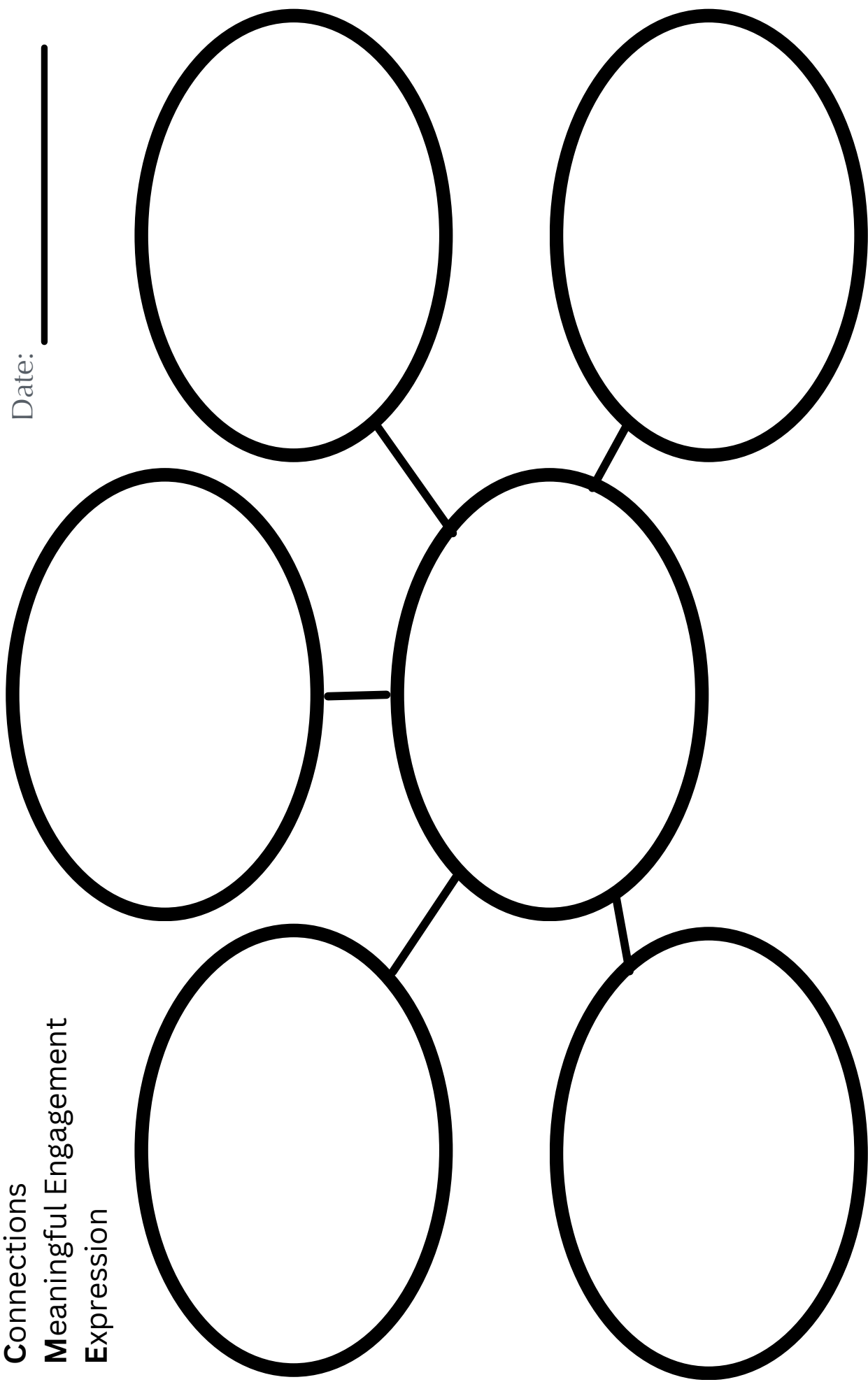
# TEMPLATE: U-C-ME

## U-C-ME

Understanding  
Connections  
Meaningful Engagement  
Expression

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



This template was adapted from material that appears in *Accelerating Literacy for Diverse Learners* (2nd edition), by Socorro G. Herrera, Shabina K. Kavimandan, Della R. Perez, and Stephanie Wessels. © 2017 by Teachers College, Columbia University.



## **Full Topic Brief 1**



## **Full Topic Brief 2**



## **Full Topic Brief 3**



## **Full Topic Brief 4**



## **Full Topic Brief 5**



## **Full Topic Brief 6**



## Educator Resources

- [Bilingual Education](#)
- [Bilingual Glossaries](#)
- [CTLE Requirements](#)
- [Instructional Samples](#)
- [Integrated ENL Resources](#)
- [Integrating Science & Language](#)
- [Linguistically Diverse Learners & the NYS Next Generation Learning Standards](#)
- [New York State Seal of Biliteracy](#)
- [Regulations & Compliance](#)
- [Scaffolding Instruction for ELLs](#)
- [School District/LEA Resources](#)
- [Tools & Best Practices](#)

### ANCHOR DOCUMENTS

[CR PART 154](#) | [BLUEPRINT FOR ELL SUCCESS](#) | [CR-SE FRAMEWORK](#)



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