

*An Introduction to Classroom Practices for
Multilingual Learners and the Next
Generation English Language Arts Learning
Standards*



New York State
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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Overview

The New York State Department of Education (NYSED) first adopted the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in 2010. In 2017, the CCLS were replaced by the New York State Next Generation Learning Standards (NGLS). The NGLS were the result of careful input from teachers, parents, and education experts. This stakeholder input ensured that English Language Learners and Multilingual Learners (ELLs and MLs¹) have equitable access to a set of standards that foster literacy skills, academic language, and requisite content knowledge by grade level. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers and Bilingual Education (BE) teachers played an integral role in the NGLS revision process. Their valuable input shaped the standards to ensure that all students' individual educational paths and socio-emotional needs are met in multiple languages, not only leading students toward college and career readiness, but also instilling in students the practice of being lifelong readers and writers (Lesaux & Galloway, 2017).

Beginning in Spring 2012, NYSED launched the [Bilingual Common Core Initiative](#) to develop new English as a New Language and Native Language Arts Standards aligned to the CCLS. As a result of a three-year process involving extensive research, NYSED developed two sets of resources known as New Language Arts Progressions (NLAP) and Home Language Arts Progressions (HLAP) for all the New York State (NYS) CCLS in every grade. The NLAP and HLAP provide a framework for teachers to ensure that ELLs are meeting the CCLS. The

¹ Under CR Part 154, “English Language Learners” are defined as students who, by reason of foreign birth or ancestry, speak or understand a language other than English, speak or understand little or no English, and require support to become proficient in English. NYS uses the term Multilingual Learners as the umbrella for current English Language Learners (ELLs), students who were once ELLs but have exited out of ELL status, Students who were never ELLs but are heritage speakers of a language other than English, and world language students.

Progressions include five levels of language proficiency (Entering, Emerging, Transitioning, Expanding, and Commanding) and demonstrate a trajectory of language learning and teaching.

The Bilingual Common Core Progressions (BCCP)

There are three central tenets in the BCCP that were implemented throughout the templates:

1. Students in the Entering, Emerging, and Transitioning new language proficiency levels could express their thinking in their home language.
2. The BCCP made use of receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) communication skills to strategically target different aspects of each standard.
3. The BCCP emphasized the use of flexible partnerships, small groupings, and whole-class discussions to foster oral language development around the texts used to target the English Language Arts (ELA) standards.

These principles were not presented in the form of a document that summarized these pedagogies. Instead, the principles were presented in the form of templates (<https://www.engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-bilingual-common-core-initiative>). In the BCCP, every standard was presented twice: one template exclusively for the New Language Arts Progressions (NLAP) and another template for the Home Language Arts Progressions (HLAP). The templates gave educators the advantage of implementing scaffolds for every standard. The 2017 NGLS prompted the revision of the principles presented in the BCCP.

The goal of this introductory document is to describe and update pedagogies that can be useful to teachers of MLs with best practices for language learning, with a focus on how the home language is used to facilitate and leverage the learning process. In this introductory document, we will outline the importance of three tenets that are relevant for all MLs:

1. Emphasizing the critical relationship between speaking and listening and literacy development
2. Encouraging language and metalinguistic awareness
3. Grouping students in flexible partnerships (small and large groups, including whole-class groups)

Teachers of MLs will find that instead of presenting templates focusing on each of the standards (as was the case with the BCCP), the current revision focuses on these three tenets, which support conceptual reasoning when engaged in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Next Generation Learning Standards (NGLS)

The NGLS are to be implemented by all teachers and students. ML students are meant to achieve the academic demands embedded in these standards. There are no alternative language proficiency standards for ELLs in NYS. The 2017 ELA NGLS include the same organizational structure as the 2011 PreK–12 CCLS. This means that teachers will be familiar with the main strands from the CCLS: Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing. Each section contains Anchor Standards that represent broad statements about the expectations for students as they prepare for high school graduation, positioning them for potential success in college, a career, or both. Grade-level standards represent a set of more specific end-of-year expectations. Table 1 summarizes the changes and additions that are currently part of the ELA NGLS. The summary is not meant to be a detailed analysis of all the changes, and teachers should consult the specific documents that describe the changes in detail by grade level.

Table 1: Changes in the 2017 Next Generation English Language Arts Standards (NGLS)

Change	Reasoning
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Added support for PreK–2 nd grade teachers ^a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NGLS focus on early childhood, with guiding points as to how the standards can be applied in PreK – 2nd grade classrooms. • Focus on the importance of learning through developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate practices and play.
Added lifelong practices for readers and writers ^b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CCLS were aimed at preparing students for college and/or a career. • The NGLS have the same aim, but their goal extends to empowering students to be active participants in professional, civic, and academic spheres.
Merged the reading for information and reading literature standards ^c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There can be a fine line between reading a fiction and nonfiction texts (as in historical fiction). • Students need to develop the skills to recognize and differentiate the elements of both genres. • A categorical code has been added at the end of each reading standard as follows: Reading for Information (RI), Reading Literature (RL), or both (RI&RL).
Reduced the writing standards ^d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several of the CCLS writing standards were redundant and were not included in the NGLS. • In the NGLS, there are grade-specific changes intended to clarify writing expectations.
Updated the language standards ^e	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Language Standards focus on English writing conventions and punctuation. • These standards were presented in the CCLS by grade level and are currently grouped within grade bands (PreK–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12).
Reconceptualized grade-level reading expectations and text complexity ^f	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NGLS reconceptualize text complexity as influenced by many factors, particularly the student’s background knowledge and motivation. • The NGLS stress that texts can be read for multiple purposes and for gaining additional perspectives (i.e., several suggested books appear in multiple grade levels).
Created standards for literacy, social studies, science, and technical subjects (grades 6–12) ^g	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy instruction is not circumscribed to the ELA classroom, but is an intrinsic part of all subject areas. • With guidance from teachers, students are expected to understand the literacy characteristics within each field of study (or disciplinary literacy).

^a <http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/introduction-to-the-nys-early-learning-standards.pdf>

^b <http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/introduction-to-the-nys-english-language-arts-standards.pdf>

^c <http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/fact-sheet-examples-revised-standards-may-2017.pdf>

^d <http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/teachers/next-generation-ela-learning-standards-crosswalks>

^e

^f <https://www.engageny.org/resource/text-list-for-p-12-ela>

^g <http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/nys-next-generation-literacy-standards-grades-6-12.pdf>

These changes have led to a reduction in the number of Anchor Standards from thirty-four in the CCLS to twenty-eight in the NGLS. Additionally, these changes ensure that all communication skills are activated. Speaking, listening, reading, and writing must take place in an

integrated manner by students participating in different literacy tasks and receiving feedback from peers and teachers. These literacy experiences will reflect the students' self-expression and connectedness to the content. These pedagogical events can take place in the students' native language, where conceptual reasoning is more evident. This leads to the development of deeper and more complex thinking (García, 2009; García & Wei, 2014). Books can be read in the students' new language at home, and teachers can offer a wider array of options to combine and balance genres, content, language, and text types. Careful attention needs to be paid to purpose and audience, as the aim is to nurture lifelong readers and writers.

Classroom Practices to Support Multilingual Learners in Meeting the NGLS: The Role of Talk and Its Critical Relationship to Literacy Development

At the core of learning is the construction of meaning. Language is at the core of all students' learning and mediates children's learning, no matter their cultural or linguistic background. Supporting children's language and literacy development has long been considered a practice that yields strong lifelong readers and writers. The interconnected and complex nature of language comes with a long developmental history and draws on a broad range of linguistic, emotional, and cognitive capacities specific and unique to each child (Van Horn & Fong Kan, 2015).

Enabling Home Language Use

Early oral language development is built on conversations that take place in the home language(s) within a social context, where motivational, behavioral, and social factors can impact the learning climate. Regardless of which language a family uses to communicate, oral language development will take place within the context of daily life (routines, greetings, environmental print, social interactions, etc.). In addition, teachers of emergent MLs in early childhood programs can capitalize on the richness of oral traditions, such as nursery rhymes, riddles, songs, and folktales, which are found in all cultures. Students need ample opportunities to engage in meaningful and relevant experiences that lead to oral language development (Maldonado &

Espinosa, 2012). Most importantly, students need to learn that voices like theirs have a place in schools, and that educators value who they are and from where their families came. (Genishi & Dyson, 2009). Furthermore, Tazi (2014) documented that Kindergarten Spanish-speaking students who received bilingual instruction were considered nearly four times more likely to be rated as *Very Ready for School* than students who received English-only instruction.

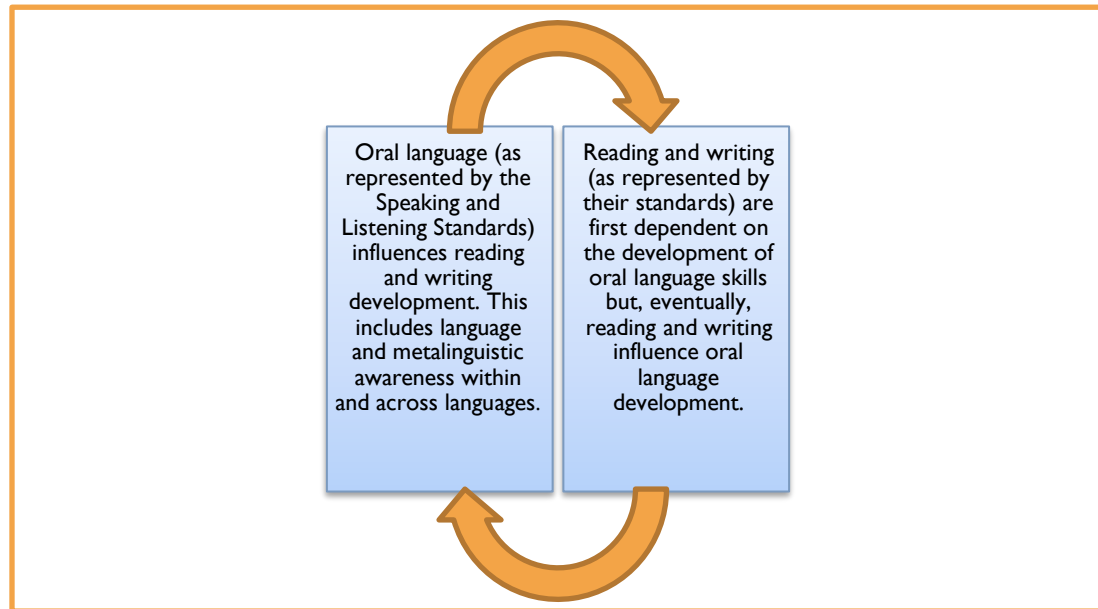
Regardless of age, MLs² attention to language input and their willingness to respond to it are affected by a host of factors, including their interest in the topic of the conversation, their relationship to the speaker, the number and identities of other conversational participants, the setting, and the language used to communicate. A student might understand a question posed in English and answer in his/her home language or a variety of English spoken in his/her community (García, Seltzer, & Witt, 2018). Although traditionally allowing this flow during a conversation was considered disruptive and wrong, it demonstrates that comprehension, understanding, and opportunities to express complexity of thought need to be placed at the forefront. By engaging in frequent and interesting conversations, multilingual students will learn and acquire the characteristics of the language used in school. This work can be enhanced by comparing and contrasting different language variations within and across languages that will support them in understanding their sociolinguistic value and usage (Funk, 2011).

Teachers interactions that best encourage language learning include having conversations and posing open-ended questions. It is important that the adult allows for the exploration of a particular topic, providing children opportunities to talk, encouraging analytical thinking, and giving information about the meanings of words. In the end, making strides in this area of students' academic development can begin with a very simple exercise, such as a shared book reading

² Multilingual learners include students who speak all varieties of English, not just another language.

(Foorman, Herrera, Petscher, Mitchell, & Truckenmiller, 2015). Figure 1 represents the reciprocal relationship between oral language (listening and speaking), written language, and reading. Initially, reading and writing are dependent on oral language skills, but eventually, reading and writing extend and influence oral language.

Figure 1: The reciprocal relationship between oral language development, reading, and writing.



Dialogic Reading

Although various approaches have been found to improve students' language, shared book reading and interactive read-alouds are key dialogic practices that target the development of reading skills and comprehension. Shared reading provides opportunities for students to join in or share the reading of a book or text while guided and supported by a teacher. The purpose of interactive read-alouds is for students to hear the teacher read a text aloud, thereby modeling fluency and intonation, and most importantly, read-alouds provide opportunities to engage students in analytic talk.

The teacher’s aim is for the student to construct a representation of the situation described by the text. In some theories, this is referred to as a “mental model” (Kintsch & Mangalath, 2011) that involves organizing a text’s ideas into an integrated whole using both information from the text and the reader’s own background knowledge. To do this, students make meaning by drawing upon a set of higher-level cognitive and linguistic skills, including inferencing, monitoring comprehension, and using text-structure knowledge. These skills, however, are not exclusive to reading. Students begin developing these skills well before formal reading instruction in a range of language comprehension situations, such as following a set of instructions and understanding their sequence; sharing their daily activities with teachers, peers, and caretakers; analyzing spoken stories, cartoons, and movies; and, of course, reading a variety of fiction and nonfiction texts (Dickinson, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2010).

Combining conversations in and around books in the context of a supportive and responsive classroom can make the difference between a child whose literacy development is at or above grade-level demands or one who struggles with reading, writing, and literacy throughout his or her K–12 education (Jacoby & Lesaux, 2017). In terms of the NYS NGLS, this means that the Speaking and Listening Standards should take center stage. Even though many of the MLs’ speaking and listening skills are tested in English, the focus for most teachers is reading and writing. This practice disregards the long line of research that has shown that oral language development, or the ability to produce extended discourse, influences reading and writing development (Lesaux & Harris, 2015). Oral language can be the main vehicle for thinking about language and for comprehending and learning from texts. In the next section, we will explore how oral language can be used to strengthen metalanguage, or the ability to explore differences and similarities between the languages present in the classroom.

Encouraging Language Awareness and Metalinguistic Awareness

We can think of language awareness and metalinguistic awareness as opposite ends of a continuum. On one end, we have language awareness, which can be defined as conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching, and language use. The pedagogical practices of language awareness—particularly in early European childhood settings—has been introduced with the aim of preparing young, multilingual learners to face a diverse world (Hélot, Frijns, & Koen Van Gorp, 2018). Language awareness activities with young children include developing sensitivity to features of oral and written language that differ from the languages they know. In Hawaiian, for example, all words end in a vowel, which is not the case for most other languages. English and Spanish share the same alphabetic principles and writing takes place from left to right, but Hebrew follows the opposite directionality. Books written in Hebrew must be held and read differently than books written in English, French, or Spanish. The purpose of these exercises is not to learn a language, but to develop the young child’s inquisitiveness about language. Teachers working in Prekindergarten and Kindergarten settings can build language awareness activities by asking parents to come into their classroom and share their language. For instance, writing the children’s name using another writing system, learning songs in a different language, and walking around their community and talking about the languages represented on different signs are all activities that foster consciousness and sensitivity to language and culture.

At the other end of the continuum is metalinguistic awareness. Metalinguistic awareness refers to the capacity that a person has to make judgments about the form of language while simultaneously attending to a meaningful linguistic context. Developing metalinguistic knowledge might be more appropriate for students in elementary, middle, and high school. Examples of metalinguistic awareness in bilingual children include a second-grade Spanish-English dual-language

class where a teacher translated a Spanish poem into English that included the word *trapito* (small rag). These second-graders noticed that forming a diminutive word in Spanish requires the morpheme *-ito* attached to the word, but in English, forming a diminutive requires—in most cases—two words (small rag). This is an example of a pedagogical practice that fosters inductive learning of language rules that impact English and Spanish (Horst, White, & Bell, 2010; Soltero-González et al., 2016; van Lier, 2001). In these cases, students support each other’s understanding by clarifying the meaning of unknown words and sentences that are then paraphrased in the students’ stronger language (Link, 2011).

Goodwin & Jiménez (2016) found that small groups of fifth-graders working on translating paragraphs from a text focused on the appropriateness of vocabulary, form, and text structure improved their comprehension and mastery of the two languages. In fact, Borrero (2011) found that participation in a program in which students received explicit instruction on translation improved the students’ performance on the state’s language arts test. Students learn that authors choose expressions, words, and structures deliberately, and teachers need to call attention to these choices (Bialystok, Peets, & Moreno, 2012).

Examples for Fostering Metalinguistic Awareness

The development of metalinguistic awareness offers the opportunity for students to put the new language side-by-side with their home language(s). In such instances, the teacher can guide students in an exploration of form. For instance, English and Spanish require subject and verb agreement based on number: *La casa es grande; las casas son grandes; the house is big; the houses are big*. However, in Spanish, the agreement must extend to the adjective (*grande/grandes*), whereas in English, it does not (Funk, 2011). Chinese uses a logographic system for representing words that are not made up of various letters as in alphabetic systems. This is an aspect of

language that students can discuss and reflect upon. In English, the basic sentence pattern is subject + verb + object (SVO); in Bangla/Bengali,³ it is subject + object + verb (SOV). For example, in English, *I eat rice* can be compared to Bangla/Bengali, আমি ভাত খাই (I rice eat), where the order is SOV.

Cognates have been the source of vocabulary development for many years, and this practice is in itself an exercise in metalinguistic awareness. We know that about three-quarters of the words shared in English and Spanish are cognates. Interestingly the English word is usually considered more academic than its Spanish counterpart. In Spanish, *pálido* is used in common language, whereas *pallid*, in English, is associated with literary language. Cognates are also found between Haitian and English. Words such as *abandon/abandone*, *conclusion/konlizyon*, and *benefit/benefiye* share the same Latin roots that have impacted English and Haitian, as well as other Romance/Latin-based languages such as Portuguese, Italian, and Romanian.

Instructional Strategies

These practices are not circumscribed to MLs, as monolingual students can also participate. Developing language awareness and metalinguistic awareness supports each child in grappling with more complex texts as a reader and a writer. It allows them to gain control of their own learning (also known as self-regulation) and their ability to communicate. In bilinguals, the juxtaposition of two (or more) language(s) learned simultaneously enhances children's awareness of the language(s) they are in the process of learning (Jessner, 2014). This runs contrary to the idea that bilingualism is enhanced by keeping languages segregated and compartmentalized. We are not advocating for a continuous switch between languages. Rather, we are advocating

³ *Bangla* is the term that refers to the language spoken in Bangladesh. In the United States, however, *Bengali* is the more common term to refer to this language. In this introductory document and all future ones, we will use the two terms Bangla/Bengali.

for an intentional and carefully planned space where students and teachers can reflect on language and begin to guide students in learning to capitalize on and build their linguistic repertoire (García, 2009).

The following are some strategies teachers can utilize in the classroom to support the development of metalinguistic awareness:

- Examine the meaning of a word. Cognates can be examined in languages that share a common historical background (*plant/planta*), but false cognates also deserve attention such as *abogado* (lawyer in Spanish) and *avocado*.
- Examine how morphemes, root words, prefixes, and suffixes work in two languages. Adverb formation in English requires attaching *-ly* at the end of the word, which is the equivalent of *-mente* in Spanish (*quickly/rápidamente*).
- Examine the grammatical structure of a sentence and discuss how it is written in the home language and in the new language.
- Examine the structure of similar type text in the two languages (e.g., a letter, a fable, or a novel).
- Examine the punctuation of a text in the new and home languages.
- Examine how an author uses two languages in a text. For example, the use of particular words, such as the name of an item, a place, or a word in dialogue between two characters.

These activities can take place in small or large groups, where students can use their home and new language with the purpose of achieving deeper understanding of the language and content being taught. For additional cognates and false cognates in Spanish and French, see the

NYS Statewide Language Regional Bilingual Education Resource Networks (RBERN) glossaries at https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metro_center/resources/glossaries.

Grouping Students in Flexible Partnerships

The strategic and intentional arrangement of student grouping in a classroom is critical to successful teaching and learning from day one (Loveless, 2013; Wagner & González-Howard, 2018). No longer is it acceptable to keep students in the same group in rigid ways; instead, the grouping of students needs to be flexible based on purpose and need.

In terms of the student groupings, language proficiency and content area knowledge are important to consider. The main point of flexible groupings is their dynamic nature. It is important to not always group proficient students with those that need more support. Researchers have found that strong students working together can push each other to reach higher levels of understanding while the teacher works with students who require more guidance and support (Baines, Blatchford, & Chowne, 2007; Brulles & Brown, 2018). Ensure that students with varied language proficiencies are strategically paired to support each other in their writing (Martín-Beltrán, 2014). At other times, the teacher might decide that, after reading a text in English, a small group of students can discuss it in the language they feel most comfortable speaking. During whole group instruction, the teacher might sit certain students beside or close to each other so the students can more fully participate during “turn and talk.” Groupings might also be formed according to students’ interests, focusing on a topic within a larger thematic study (Durán & Palmer, 2013). Recently arrived students who might be unfamiliar with how to work in small, collaborative groups might need support from the teacher and peers. Starting this work in partnerships will facilitate the process of teaching them how to co-learn. The main point is that

these groupings are meant to encourage a genuine dialogue to clarify, elaborate, compare, and synthesize information for the purpose of learning.

Instructional Practices for Multilingual Learners in the NGLS

As we revisit the BCCP to align them with the NGLS, we recognize that oral language, metalinguistic awareness, and flexible groupings play a crucial role in the language, content, and social development of MLs. New resources will assist educators in helping this population do the following:

- Engage in developmentally appropriate extended discourse (e.g., stand-alone narratives, explanations, opinions, descriptions, debates, presentations centered on content areas, retellings, paraphrasing, and posing questions to peers).
- Foster flexible partnerships and small group and whole class engagements where students can participate in purposeful extended discourse around relevant content. The purpose is to improve, expand, clarify, and support their evolving meaning-making around the content at hand. These purposeful interactions will make the students' answers stronger and clearer. Flexible grouping enhances opportunities for the development of the new/home language and content.
- Promote metalinguistic awareness by creating opportunities to compare and contrast the students' linguistic knowledge in the home and new language. This can be accomplished through selective translations of age-appropriate text excerpts. The purpose is to examine linguistic and culturally specific uses of language and promote text comprehension. This is a pedagogical practice that fosters analysis about and through language and that is unique to Bilingual/Multilingual Learners and speakers of many varieties of English.

The NLAP and HLAP can continue to be useful to educators in planning instruction and when developing appropriate expectations for students at varying language and literacy levels. The BCCP have allowed teachers in ENL and BE programs to target grade-appropriate texts and apply strategies to aid in providing multiple points of entry for students. Due to new enhancements in the NGLS grade bands, coordinators and teams will analyze the current resources and determine which templates may no longer be relevant. In addition, this revision of the BCCP will help describe the NGLS and will identify best instructional practices for assisting all MLs in the classroom. The six grade bands (listed below) will cover PreK–12th grade and are aligned with the 2017 New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). While PreK is not part of the grade bands described by the NYSESLAT, teachers of language-diverse students in PreK play an instrumental role in developing students’ background knowledge and oral language skills in the home and new language:

- Grade Band 1: PreK
- Grade Band 2: Kindergarten
- Grade Band 3: First Grade
- Grade Band 4: Second Grade
- Grade Band 5: Third Grade
- Grade Band 6: Fourth Grade
- Grade Band 7: Fifth Grade
- Grade Band 8: Sixth Grade
- Grade Band 9: Seventh Grade
- Grade Band 10: Eighth Grade
- Grade Band 11: Ninth to Tenth Grade

- Grade Band 12: Eleventh to Twelfth Grade

In addition to these resources, supportive online learning opportunities focused on appropriate classroom practices for MLs and educators will be made available. Teachers are also encouraged to consult Engage NY resources.

Teachers Working with MLs

Our aim is that teachers working with MLs will find much use in these materials. It is worth pointing out that the [CUNY New York State Initiative for Emergent Bilinguals \(NYSIEB\)](#) has consistently contributed to the development of materials, videos, and documents for teachers working with MLs in a variety of contexts. For instance, ESOL teachers and teachers working in Transitional Bilingual Programs can support their students by opening spaces where students can engage with peers and teachers in dialogues that take place in their home language and that, most importantly, support conceptual reasoning and understanding of the material at hand. Students can read books in their home language that develop aspects of the units of study being covered in class. Students can share their understanding of how the home and new language share or do not share different aspects. These conversations can take place even if the ESOL teacher does not know the student's home language, since the main goal is that the student is engaging in thinking, translating, and/or comparing two or more languages. Teachers working with MLs can organize flexible groupings that reflect the students' interests and the level of support that a student needs or can provide to others depending on the assigned or required task. Communication and comprehension are priorities for students who are still acquiring the language skills to convey their knowledge in English.

Teachers Working in Bilingual/Dual-Language Programs

In NYS, dual language and transitional bilingual education programs can serve both MLs in need of developing English skills as well as English-proficient students interested in developing skills in another language. Dual-language bilingual programs are expected to maintain clear separation for structuring language teaching. For teachers working in side-by-side programs where each teacher has the responsibility of helping the students develop either English or a language other than English, it will be useful to bring the languages together at specific points during the week to allow the students to compare and reflect on the languages they are in the process of learning. In addition to increasing their metalinguistic awareness, these activities allow students to achieve deeper levels of understanding in the content area under analysis.

This document stresses the understanding that teachers of MLs have unique challenges, interests, abilities, and needs. The purpose of this introductory document, as well as all forthcoming materials, is to provide teachers with resources that are unique to new language and bilingual learners.

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