ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE
COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS

Task Force on English Language Learners and Bilingual Education

2021-2022

Task Force Goal

To assist urban public school systems nationally in improving the quality of instruction for English Language Learners and immigrant children.

Task Force Chairs

Siad Ali, Minneapolis School Board
Jesus Jara, Clark County Superintendent
DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW
COVID-19-related & Ongoing Support to Member School Districts

Overview
Figure 1 summarizes the ongoing supports the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) is offering to English Language Learners (ELL) programs in member districts for SY 2021-22. Additionally, the figure lists current projects. The listing of supports and projects, detailed in the following sections, is not exhaustive and does not account for additional support services and projects that may arise upon request from member districts.

Figure 1. Summary of CGCS ELL Program and Supports for SY 2021-22
Support Meetings (ELL Program Directors Meetings)
In SY 2021-22, the Council’s ELL Team has continued regularly scheduled meetings for ELL program directors and staff that began in March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. During these meetings, attendees lean on one another for shared expertise and best practices and exchange information on timely issues of concern. Typically, around 30-40 participants pose questions for collective thought, share updates, and offer suggestions. These meetings will continue as long as attendees find them to be useful.

- Since July 2021, the meetings have been held monthly.
- Some meetings include special guests who present on topics related to pressing needs in member districts.
  - During the December 2021 meeting, the lead staff of the Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) effort to resettle refugees from Afghanistan presented important information to help member district plan for new arrivals.
  - For the January 2022 meeting, researchers from Oregon State University and WestEd are scheduled to discuss a project funded by the U.S. Department of Education to examine co-teaching and collaboration practices for supporting ELL instruction in school districts.

Publications
The two publications produced in response to the COVID-19-related issues continue to be used. ELL directors and staff in Council-member districts engaged deeply in the development of both documents. Several member districts continue to use the Council-developed interim screener due to ongoing difficulties with in-person screening.

Assessing Language Proficiency during Extended School Closures: Sample Questionnaires (May 2020)
This document provides sample questionnaires across grade bands that are designed to provisionally identify students as English learners (ELs) during the COVID-19-related school closures, which impede the administration of face-to-face screening protocols.
Supporting English Learners in the COVID-19 Crisis (August 2020)

This guide is the ninth in a series developed by the Council of the Great City Schools to help districts prepare to reopen schools. The suggestions made in this document build on the notion of shared responsibility across school district departments and the importance of a well-articulated curriculum for the success of English learners; and it covers a range of areas: screening and placement, instructional practices and technology, English language development, staffing, professional development, assessment, and family engagement.

**Communication**

In line with broader organizational efforts to increase awareness of publications and resources from the Council, the ELL Team designed and implemented a social media plan for the *Connecting 3Ls™ to English Language Development Standards & Frameworks* (2021) report in collaboration with the Communications Team during November 2021.
Legislative

- **Assessments.** As a direct result of the pandemic-related school closures, the Council continues to be in contact with the U.S. Department of Education on assessment implementation concerns. Echoing points raised by the Council’s Legislative Team, the ELL Team shared with Deputy Secretary Marten and the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) staff the need to consider the challenges of assessing English learners during ongoing disruptions caused by the pandemic in the policy and guidance discussions pertaining to spring 2022 accountability assessments.

- **Refugees.** More recently, attention has shifted to making the Department aware of the district needs as they welcome thousands of refugees from Afghanistan and other parts of the world in a relatively short span of time. To be sure, Council-member districts have historically received and welcomed refugees, though in smaller numbers than now and without the added logistical challenges of a pandemic. On December 16, officials leading the Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) effort to welcome Afghan refugees presented to and heard from ELL directors and staff. During the last meeting of 2021 of the National EL Roundtable, the Council reiterated the need for information and resources to support arriving refugee students.

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**School District Assistance to Council Members**

Members of the ELL Team assist Council-member school districts upon request. This assistance ranges from quick responses to queries that may involve issuing a short survey to the membership to long-term engagements on specific ELL programmatic concerns. Recent topics on which districts have requested assistance include—
- Enrollment procedures for refugees, including grade placement determinations
- Policies for transferring international credits
- Grading policies for newcomers
- Scope and sequence of learning for newcomer students, especially those who are older with significantly interrupted education
- Summer programming for English learners

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**2022 BIRE Meeting in San Antonio**

The 2022 BIRE Meeting will be held at the Embassy Suites San Antonio Riverwalk Downtown from May 9 to 14 in San Antonio, TX. An option for virtual participation is being considered. The presentations and work sessions will draw from the areas of need and interests identified during the regular virtual meetings of ELL program directors and those identified in the 2020 post-BIRE survey. Potential topics of presentations include the following—

- Evaluating the rigor of instruction for ELLs in content areas
- Evaluating existing and selecting additional instructional approaches and materials for foundational skills instruction for ELLs
- Attention to ELL data to monitor achievement and student engagement, particularly in light of the unfinished learning due to the pandemic-related disruptions
- Evaluating and improving the rigor of instruction for newcomer ELLs
- Supporting long-term English learners
- Integrating ELD approaches and frameworks with the ELA/Literacy frameworks of district
- MTSS processes to ensure ELLs are properly served in Tiers 1, 2, and 3

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**Foundational Literacy Skills Development for ELs & Quality Instructional Materials**

Foundational literacy skills development for ELs has been a recurring concern among district staff responsible for EL programs. The Council Team issued two surveys related to literacy instruction to understand the challenges better. During the ELL Directors meetings, Council staff shared the findings to guide discussion on the next steps for Council support related to foundational skills development for ELs. From this discussion, ELL Directors identified two priority areas—
1. **Reviewing/evaluating existing programs** used to teach foundational skills to ELs and
2. **Identifying supplemental materials** that specifically address the needs of ELs in developing foundational literacy skills.

The current state of instructional materials for teaching foundational literacy skills to English learners and the reported needs of Council-member districts call for a research-based, robust, and clear set of criteria as well as a suggested protocol for reviewing and selecting quality materials that specifically address EL needs in foundational literacy development.

**Working group.** The Council has assembled a working group comprising Council-member district staff—

- **Clark County:** Jessica Banales, Claudia Molina, Ignacio Ruiz
- **Dallas:** Richard Heffernan
- **Los Angeles:** Lydia Acosta Stephens, Carla Gutierrez, Roxanna Sosa
- **New York City:** Mark Anderson, Stela Radovanovic
- **Omaha:** Nicki Carmichael, Jaimie Cogua
- **San Antonio:** Esmeralda Alday, Olivia Hernandez
- **Tulsa:** Laura Grisso

Later, language acquisition and literacy experts will be invited to engage in an iterative process to develop criteria for selecting high-quality foundational skills instructional materials that address the needs of ELs.

**Status.** The Council staff produced a preliminary framework and criteria draft based on the latest research on ELs and early literacy. From September to December, the working group has met five times (on 9/9, 9/23, 10/14, 11/4, and 12/2) to suggest and make refinements. The aim is to have by February an initial draft for ELL directors to review. Afterward, an opportunity to refine the document will occur through virtual meetings to review and discuss existing materials (or those under consideration) using the draft criteria. During the 2022 BIRE Meeting, a joint session with EL program staff and materials development staff from publishing companies will be held to conduct a final review of the criteria.

**A Quality Instructional Materials for ELLs presentation** occurred during the Publishers ARP Meeting hosted by the Council as part of a grant-funded project to support dialogue with educational publishers around urban district needs and ARP spending priorities on December

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1 Active working group members as of December 2021.
16, 2021. The Council’s EL Team presented the ELL Frameworks for Mathematics\(^2\) and ELA/ELD,\(^3\) highlighting the features that have heightened significance given the need to address unfinished learning due to the pandemic-related school interruptions.

**PLP: Council’s Courses on Complex Thinking and Communication**

The Council’s inaugural courses on *Complex Thinking and Communication* comprise 11 courses beginning with *Foundations*, followed by five courses in each pathway (ELA/ELD and Math). (See Figure 2.) The course content is meant to be delivered with district facilitators and amounts to more than one year’s worth of content.

![Figure 2. Complex Thinking and Communication Course Sequence](image)

**District usage.** To date, 13 districts have or are currently subscribed to the courses to provide professional development via professional learning communities, including through virtual sessions. Especially during the pandemic-related school closures, some districts created individual learning pathways for staff to study the course content. A total of 5 districts have been continuously enrolled since 2017-18 and three new districts have enrolled in 2019 and

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Table 1 shows the districts currently enrolled or in the process of enrolling in the courses.4

### Table 1. Subscribing Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Launch Year</th>
<th>Current Subscribers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2017        | • Guilford County Public Schools  
|             | • Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools5  
|             | • NYC Department of Education – District 256  
| 2018        | • Anchorage School District  
|             | • Oakland Unified School District  
| 20197       | • Atlanta Public Schools  
|             | • Kansas City Public Schools  
| 2021        | • East Baton Rouge  

**Training sessions.** The Council has held several training sessions on the professional development courses. A total of 11 training sessions have been held by the Council, mostly in conjunction with its BIRE meeting or the fall conference, reaching over 127 facilitators from 28 districts (with some attending several sessions).8 In 2020, two general sessions (for facilitators and other interested attendees) were held virtually, and in 2021 a virtual four-part series was held starting on February 3 and concluding on March 17. (For sessions held in 2020 and 2021 see Table 2.)

### Table 2. Training Sessions 2020 through 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/s &amp; Focus</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Trainees</th>
<th>Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 17, 2020 Implementing 3Ls™ in a Virtual Setting (Guilford)</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
<td>ELA/ELD</td>
<td>209 from CGCS Districts, 228 Total</td>
<td>33 CGCS Districts, 1 Nonprofit, 1 Non-CGCS School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 7, 2020 Webinar Presentation on 3Ls™ and Foundational Skills</td>
<td>Zoom Webinar jointly sponsored by SAP &amp; CGCS</td>
<td>ELA/ELD</td>
<td>96 from CGCS Districts; 223 Total</td>
<td>32 CGCS Districts, 94 Other Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 3, 2021 3Ls™ Training Series: Introduction and Connecting to District Initiatives</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
<td>ELA/ELD</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 17, 2021 3Ls™ Training Series: Framed Motivation and Word Play</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
<td>ELA/ELD</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 The COVID-19 pandemic has delayed onboarding and/or implementation in some of the newer subscribing districts.

5 Participated in original trial launch of courses in 2017.

6 Began implementing the 3Ls™ with Maryann Cucchiara prior to the development of the courses. Participated in the development of the ELA/ELD courses.

7 Onboarding delayed due to COVID-19 pandemic.

8 These figures do not include participants of the virtual training sessions in 2020 and 2021.
Expert training and kick-off. Training sessions have been held in specific districts by request. (See Table 3.) Dates for several upcoming district-specific sessions are being re-considered due to the staffing challenges in districts and concerns over the recent spike in COVID-19 cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/s &amp; Focus</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Trainees</th>
<th>Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 3, 2021 3Ls™ Training Series: Reading Closely and Juicy Sentences</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
<td>ELA/ELD</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 17, 2021 (final of the series) 3Ls™ Training Series: Differentiated Tasks</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
<td>ELA/ELD</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. District-requested Training Sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>Jun. 2018</td>
<td>Maryann Cucchiara</td>
<td>Training for 25 teachers who taught in summer school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilford County</td>
<td>Aug. 2019</td>
<td>Maryann Cucchiara</td>
<td>Approximately 30 facilitators and teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro-Nashville</td>
<td>Sep. 23-25, 2019 (virtual) Nov. 12-13, 2019 (in person)</td>
<td>Maryann Cucchiara</td>
<td>Held virtual session with coaches and teachers Held in-person session for over 50 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakland</td>
<td>Jun. 13, 2019</td>
<td>Lily Wong Fillmore</td>
<td>Overview for about 30 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchorage</td>
<td>Nov. 26-27, 2018 Nov. 11, 2019</td>
<td>Harold Asturias</td>
<td>Launch math pathway with teachers, coaches, and facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Antonio</td>
<td>Sep. 22, 2020 (virtual) Sep. 29, 2020 (virtual)</td>
<td>Maryann Cucchiara</td>
<td>Held virtual session with coaches and PD leaders Held virtual session for teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas City</td>
<td>Jun. 9, 2021 (virtual)</td>
<td>Maryann Cucchiara</td>
<td>Held virtual session with ELL team, Literacy team, principals, and district academic leaders, introducing them to the 3Ls™ approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas City</td>
<td>Aug. 3, 2021 (virtual)</td>
<td>Maryann Cucchiara</td>
<td>Introductory training session for teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Revamped facilitator support space. The Council created a course on the Professional Learning Platform that includes recordings of training sessions (delivered by course designers/experts to district facilitators and teachers) as a resource for facilitators implementing the PLP courses. The assets include presentation materials and sample lessons, as well as lists of text sets compiled by experts. Additional elements to be added as they are developed and shared by
districts include units of study, text set lists, and professional development implementation plans.

**Connections document.** The Council’s ELL Team worked with Maryann Cucchiara and a team of educators to develop a companion document to *3Ls™ Learning, Language, and Literacy* (2018) that outlines key connections between the 3Ls™ approach and other English language development frameworks, standards, or approaches, including the Council’s ELD framework, WIDA, ELPA21, and the California ELA/ELD Framework.

**Connecting 3Ls™ to English Language Development Standards & Frameworks (September 2021)**

School districts that have adopted the 3Ls™ approach to provide rigorous instruction for English learners (ELs) have, invariably, had to make a case for what this approach offers, how it reflects best practices in English language development (ELD) instruction, and how it meets the needs of English learners. They have also had to make explicit connections to their own district standards, frameworks, and practices that guide their instruction to English learners.

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**Course Development: Teaching Writing to ELLs Using Cognitive Strategies**

In 2018, the *Pathway to Academic Success Project* at the University of California, Irvine (UCI), was awarded a five-year, $14.7 million grant, based on its strong track record of improving outcomes for English learners and a robust dissemination component thanks to the partnership with the Council of the Great City Schools. Dr. Carol Booth Olson, Principal Investigator (PI) on the *Pathway to Academic Success Project* at the University of California, Irvine (UCI), invited the Council to collaborate on the project, specifically to bolster the dissemination part of the application for *Education Innovation and Research* (EIR) expansion grant application administered by the U.S. Department of Education.

**Course development.** Specifically, as a partner with the University of California Irvine Writing Project, the Council will receive over $600,000 to create a 10-course professional development program to be disseminated using the CGCS Professional Learning Platform. Following the Council’s design for hybrid professional learning, the courses will include videos and training materials to provide a much-needed focus on writing offered by the Pathway professional development project.

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development. *Pathway* is a professional learning experience designed to enhance the text-based analytical writing of English learners across all content areas.

**Status.** In October 2021, the Council’s EL Research and Policy Director met with Dr. Booth Olson to provide a project update and share the first three courses fleshed-out by the Council team. Dr. Booth Olson was impressed with the progress made on course development and agreed to the next steps for filming content videos and creating course assets in Spring 2022.