

HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR YOUR K-12 MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS



1. RESEARCH

Learn all that you can about the laws and policies concerning ELs in your state and district. Understand important considerations. What is the EL population in my school? Proficiency levels, native languages, literacy levels in the home language, SLIFE, DEUSS dates? How are ELs identified, monitored, exited, and reclassified? What state tests are ELs required to take, and what accommodations are available? What are graduation requirements and what is our school and district EL graduation rate?

2. ACCESS

Attend meetings that involve ELs to ensure clear communication and access to programs and opportunities. Use your knowledge to be a voice for students during IEP, MTSS, Gifted, and EL Committee meetings and share these rights with families. Make sure ELs have equal access to honors and A.P. courses, internships, honor societies, athletic teams, and college preparation programs. Parent outreach is critical. Show others how to use Talking Points, Remind, or Microsoft and Google translation apps. Plan meetings for parents and invite community partners/resources that can assist families with other needs including immigration attorneys, healthcare, or adult ESL classes.

3. ACADEMICS

Assist teachers with best practices and strategies to support ELs and promote an asset-based philosophy about multilingual learners. English language learners spend most of their day in classrooms with mainstream teachers who may have varying degrees of ESOL preparation or endorsement. Ongoing professional development on strategies that support language and content acquisition will help teachers understand how to leverage language to maximize academic growth. Ask your administrator if you can present at a faculty meeting or join other PLCs in your building; select research-based strategies that are powerful for all students but necessary for ELs. Invite your district ESOL specialist to co-present with you or help facilitate a book study.

4. NETWORK

Seek professional learning opportunities within and outside your district and build a team on your campus. WIDA, SIOP, Seidlitz, state and local TESOL affiliates, and ASCD offer opportunities for excellent PD. Some of their virtual offerings are free.

Join the conversation online with colleagues in the field:

- VirtuEL (a free, online conference for teachers of English language learners)
- Podcasts (Highest Aspirations by Ellevation or Boosting Achievement with Carol Salva)
- Twitter (EL leaders to follow: @LarryFerlazzo, @TanELLclassroom, @emilyfranESL, @MsSalvac, @Toppel_ELD)
- Online Book Studies like #ELLChat_BkClub.

