High-Leverage Strategies for Rhode Island’s Multilingual Learners

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LEAP Task Force Meeting
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RIs Multilingual Learners & COVID-19

MLLs and their families have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic
- The academic impact of COVID-19 has been particularly pronounced for multilingual learners

Student absences have increased 46% over last school year in RI.
- MLLs were absent more often than non-MLLs.
Strategies to Expand Educational Opportunity for Multilingual Learners

- Maximizing Learning: Time and Grouping
- Families' Linguistic and Cultural Resources
- Student Attendance
- Educator Collaboration

Expanding Multilingual Learner Equity
Optimizing Attendance: Monitoring and Outreach

- Monitoring student attendance + targeted outreach efforts can help improve attendance for ALL students, but especially MLLs.
- In a randomized field experiment, mailers emphasizing the connection between good attendance and specific, grade-based learning outcomes sent to parents of high-absence students increased attendance by 7.7% across all students.
- The treatment effect was nearly double for MLL students compared to native-English speakers.

(Robinson et al., 2018)
Sammy Smith has been absent 5 school days.*

Dear Guardian of Sammy Smith,

Sammy has been absent 5 school days this year.

DID YOU KNOW?: Missing school in fifth grade may lead to poor attendance in middle and high school.

Please help Sammy build positive attendance habits in fifth grade.

Absences can have lasting effects. Please make sure Sammy attends fifth grade on time, every day!

Best,
Alex Doe
American County Superintendent

*This is the total number of absences on record at your student’s school district as of February 2016. This number includes excused and unexcused absences. Please contact your student’s school district directly if you have questions regarding your child’s absences. This card is part of the Attendance Matters Project, which aims to increase awareness about the importance of attendance in American County. If you have questions, or if you do not want to receive future cards, please call (123) 456-7890, email at attendanceproject@researchproject.com, or visit www.ac.org/attendance matters. Please be sure to provide your unique four-digit code in all communications: A12B. If you received this card in error or have already opted out of receiving these cards, please disregard this one. We apologize for the inconvenience. We recognize that some absences, due to illness or emergencies, are unavoidable. Please discuss in advance with your student’s school and health provider when to keep your student at home.

American County Office of Education
C/O: The Attendance Matters Project
11 E. 1st Street
California City, CA 98765

4-Digit Code: A12B
Parent/Guardian of:
Sammy Smith
7112 Locust St.
California City, CA 98765

(Robinson et al., 2018)
• 6 mailers with specific messaging:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mailing</th>
<th>Date Received</th>
<th>Messaging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nov 16–20, 2015</td>
<td>Attendance in early grades affects student learning (English Language Arts Common Core State Standards).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Feb 2–5, 2016</td>
<td>Absences in earlier grades can build long-lasting habits that result in absences in later grades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mar 1–7, 2016</td>
<td>Absences result in missed learning opportunities that cannot be replaced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mar 23–25, 2016</td>
<td>Attendance is linked to literacy skill development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>May 11–13, 2016</td>
<td>Strong attendance is associated with higher likelihood of high school graduation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Key for MLL students: Mailers were sent **in students’ native language**.

• Total cost was $5.68 per student per year.

(Robinson et al., 2018)
Maximizing Learning: Time & Grouping Strategies

• Extended learning time outside of regular school hours or during the summer is especially helpful to MLLs.
• Example: Center City Public Charter Schools use Title III funds to operate ESL After the Bell, a 2-hour after-school program designed to meet K-8 MLLs’ academic support needs.
ESL After the Bell Model

(Garcia & Muñiz, 2020)
Maximizing Learning: Time & Grouping Strategies

- Increasing opportunities to work one-on-one or in small groups with teachers, paraprofessionals, tutors, etc. can provide an additional boost for MLLs.
- MLLs are an exceptionally diverse group of students. Small groups allow for differentiated instruction that reflects the different learning needs within this subgroup.
- For example, one group may need assistance with foundational reading skills, whereas another group may have a strong literacy background in their native language and need to focus more on transferring those skills into English.
How to Use Small Groups for MLLs

- Use **assessment data** to identify students who could benefit from small group intervention
- **Tailor content** of small-group instruction to students’ specific needs
  - Foundational literacy skills (decoding, fluent reading)
  - Comprehension of grade-level texts
- Provide instruction in small groups (**3-5 students**)
  - Homogenous groups for foundational literacy skills
  - Heterogenous groups for comprehension, oral and written language
  - Monitor progress and regroup as needed
- Plan activities that address **both language and literacy skills simultaneously**

(Baker et al., 2014)
Valuing Cultural & Linguistic Assets: Engaging Families to Promote Academic Success

- Encouraging families to draw upon their native language promotes trust and engagement among all stakeholders and improves MLL students’ academic success.
- Family engagement programs that focus on bridging home literacy in students’ native languages have been found to hold promise for MLLs.
- High-quality and publicly available resources can facilitate home-school literacy connections.
Leyenda de los temblores

Por estas tierras se cuenta que, hace mucho tiempo, hubo una serpiente de colores brillante y larga. Era de cascabel y para avanzar arrastraba su cuerpo como una víbora cualquiera. Pero tenía algo que la hacía distinta a las demás: una cola de manantial, una cola de agua transparente.

Ssssh ssssh... la serpiente avanzaba. Ssssh ssssh... la serpiente de colores recorría la tierra. Ssssh ssssh... la serpiente parecía un arcoíris juguetón, cuando sonaba su cola de maraca. Sssh sssh...
Building Capacity: Targeted Professional Development

• Opportunities for gen ed and MLL-focused educators to work collaboratively → improved instruction for MLLs.
• Leaders can allocate and invest in specific co-planning time and set co-teaching expectations.
• MLL-focused teachers should be alongside gen ed teachers in curriculum development and PLCs.
• Establishing a culture that encourages shared responsibility for MLLs’ learning and positions every teacher as a language teacher can break down silos.
Strategies to Avoid

- Mere translation of content is insufficient to meet MLL students’ needs.
- In setting budget priorities during the pandemic, it is critical to keep equity in mind to ensure the needs of MLL students are met.
In Summary…

High-leverage strategies to invest in for multilingual learners:

- **Optimize attendance**: Targeted attendance outreach using mailers in native language
- **Extend and Maximize learning time**: Extend high-quality learning time and work with MLLs in purposefully structured small groups
- **Value cultural and linguistic assets**: Encourage families to draw upon their native language by embracing and supporting home literacy practices
- **Build educator capacity and partnership**: Invest in collaboration between educators who focus on MLL students and general education teachers
This brief is one in a series aimed at providing K-12 education decision makers and advocates with an evidence base to ground discussions about how to best serve students during and following the novel coronavirus pandemic. Click here to learn more about the EdResearch for Recovery Project and view the set of COVID-19 response-and-recovery topic areas and practitioner-generated questions.

CENTRAL QUESTION

Recognizing longstanding educational inequities, what research-backed practices can district administrators, school leaders, and classroom teachers use to support English Learner (EL) students’ academic success and linguistic development in an instructional context transformed by COVID-19?

Source: https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch_for_Recovery_Brief_15.pdf
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References

