



Restart & Recovery: Fostering Shared Responsibility for English Learner Education in Remote and Hybrid Learning Environments

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This document compiles evidence-based resources and information for state education agencies (SEAs) to support English learner (EL) students and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic. States can repurpose this resource to meet their needs. If you repurpose this document, please use the following language: “This resource draws on a resource created by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) that is based on guidance compiled from state education agencies, national organizations, and the U.S. Department of Education.”

State leaders are instrumental in [facilitating access and equity for English learner \(EL\) students](#) amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. One way that state leaders can move their systems toward equity is by promoting shared responsibility for EL students and families at the state, district, school, and community levels. Although EL-specific staff are often viewed as solely responsible for EL service delivery, ELs interact with multiple educators throughout the day, and their families often interface with a variety of school-based staff. Sharing responsibility for EL education among these stakeholders helps to ensure that EL students are engaged and challenged, and their families feel valued.

Federal guidance¹ recommends promoting continuity in language and content learning for ELs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Such continuity necessitates collaboration between EL and general education or content teachers, which can be challenging to accomplish during remote or hybrid instruction. Further, attending to the linguistic, academic, and socioemotional needs of EL students and their families may require a system of support that extends beyond teachers to include paraprofessionals, home/school liaisons, guidance counselors, community organizations, and families.

Fostering shared responsibility in remote and hybrid environments requires explicit strategies and structural changes, some of which are outlined in CCSSO’s [Considerations for Teaching and Learning](#). In this resource, the authors outline key challenges to sharing responsibility

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Fact sheet: Providing services to English learners during the COVID-19 outbreak (Washington, DC: May 18, 2020), <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/coronavirus/covid-19-elfactsheet.pdf/>.

specifically for EL education in remote and hybrid conditions, with recommendations to help district leaders, teachers, and other school staff members implement collaborative strategies and structures that attend to EL students and families. State leaders can use this resource to inform the development of state guidance for districts and schools navigating EL education during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the creation of professional learning opportunities for district and school leadership teams.

Challenges to Shared Responsibility during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Remote and hybrid learning conditions pose several challenges to ensuring shared responsibility for EL education, including:

- EL specialists, general education and content teachers, and other support staff (e.g., paraprofessionals, home/school liaisons, guidance counselors) have far fewer opportunities to engage in real-time, face-to-face interactions during the school day that can support communication and collaboration.
- Some districts and schools are prioritizing in-person instruction for EL students and students identified for special education services; other districts/schools have developed cohort models where small groups of students are assigned to one teacher for in-person instruction. Although these approaches provide targeted instructional supports, they may also unnecessarily segregate EL students and teachers, reducing ELs' access to linguistic models and placing responsibility for teaching EL students and communicating with EL families on a single educator.
- Family engagement at school sites and with school staff is more limited, constraining opportunities for families to access language services and other necessary supports and limiting opportunities for educators to learn about the strengths and needs of EL students and families.²
- Enacting shared responsibility requires time and resources. The pandemic places additional demands on leaders, educators, staff, and families, as many navigate unforeseen personal and professional challenges (e.g., caring for loved ones, shifts in financial stability, learning new technologies).
- Funds may not currently be allocated to fostering online collaboration among school staff, supporting creative staffing models that would foster shared responsibility, or promoting meaningful engagement with families and community partners.

² U.S. Department of Education, Engaging families and communities in the education of English learners (Washington, DC: April 18, 2011), <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/englishlearnerppt418webinar.ppt>.

Strategies for Promoting Shared Responsibility for English Learner Education

Although applicable across all instructional models, the five strategies presented in this resource are especially relevant in remote and hybrid learning contexts. The five strategies are summarized below and then will be explained in further detail with examples of how leaders, teachers, and other staff members can implement each approach. Monitoring the use of these strategies will be important for SEAs' understanding of whether and how districts and schools support continuity of EL services in remote and hybrid learning contexts.

- 1. Develop online approaches to support teachers' collaborative practices:** Create routines that facilitate regular online interactions between EL and general education or content teachers that facilitate EL-focused professional learning and foster an asset orientation toward supporting EL students and families. Title III funds may be used for teacher professional learning, if it is EL-specific.
- 2. Leverage guidance departments and related staff members:** Develop online opportunities for guidance counselors and related staff members (e.g., school psychologists, social-emotional learning specialists, school nurses) to collaborate with teachers in developing new approaches for addressing ELs' socioemotional needs and general well-being during remote and hybrid learning.
- 3. Identify and support home/school liaisons:** Proactively bridge home- and school-based learning by engaging home/school liaisons who maintain regular connections with teachers and communicate with families in their home language using culturally relevant technologies such as text messaging and WhatsApp. Title III funds can be used to support the creation of these positions when they supplement support for ELs, and CARES Act funds can be used to augment communication with EL families.
- 4. Conduct ongoing outreach to community- and faith-based organizations:** Partner with community- and faith-based organizations to facilitate resource-sharing, identify necessary supports, and work toward maintaining and/or extending outside-of-school learning opportunities.
- 5. Expand language services for families:** Review available language services to ensure that EL families have access to appropriate technology and relevant instructions and schedules that allow them to share responsibility effectively with teachers. SEAs and LEAs can generally use CARES Act funds for communications with parents, including translation and interpretation services.

Strategy 1. Develop online approaches to support teachers' collaborative practices.

Create routines that facilitate regular online interactions between EL and general education or content teachers that facilitate EL-focused professional learning and foster an asset-oriented approach to supporting EL students and families. Title III funds may be used for teacher professional learning if it is EL specific.

Examples

State leaders may consider supporting district and schools in adopting the following practices:

District administrators:

- Ensure that frameworks for online learning incorporate language objectives and identify corresponding instructional strategies and learning resources for general and EL-specific teachers.
- Create interactive webinars that include general and EL-specific teachers and provide opportunities for collaborative planning focused on supporting ELs during remote learning.
- Design protocols whereby general and EL-specific teachers can synchronously or asynchronously coordinate lesson-planning to reinforce similar language and content skills.
- Integrate EL instructional practices and student engagement into supervision checklists and rubrics used by administrators to assess EL instruction in online and hybrid learning environments.

School administrators and instructional coaches:

- Identify online platforms and set up schedules to facilitate synchronous instructional planning that include EL-specific teachers with general and special education teacher teams to coordinate pedagogy. Use this time to coordinate technological tools/strategies to ensure continuity of EL language and content learning across the remote school day.
- Use discussion protocols during online faculty meetings that engage general and EL-specific teachers in conversations about supporting EL students' language and content learning and building on their strengths.

General and EL-specific educators:

- Meet virtually to establish priorities and goals that consider EL students' linguistic, academic, and socioemotional needs and strengths during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Develop student profiles to identify similarities and differences among ELs for grouping purposes and which EL students would benefit most from synchronous or face-to-face instruction.

- Design a predictable schedule for co-teaching or small-group instruction in online and hybrid contexts. Coordinate with special educators to ensure that all students' needs are being considered.

Scenario

When Angie, an EL teacher for grades 4-5 in a small, rural district, logged onto her district's professional development workshop for math instructors, she was pleased to see that she wasn't the only EL-specific educator in the online workshop. The workshop facilitator had placed teachers into breakout rooms with their grade-level colleagues to discuss how to adapt instructional practices for an online format. Angie joined the 5th-grade team, which also included the school's three math teachers and the special education teacher. As the math teachers discussed a lesson on multiplying fractions and mixed numbers, Angie reminded them that they should also set language goals for their EL students. The teachers worked together in their online lesson-planning workspace to collectively edit the lesson with these goals in mind; Angie led a discussion on integrating language scaffolds, which led to a group decision to include several instructional moves to support EL students in explaining their reasoning.

Questions to consider:

- Which district and/or school structures can facilitate collaboration among general and EL-specific educators in remote or hybrid learning contexts? What barriers might hinder collaboration?
- How can districts/schools include the special education teachers in collaboration routines focused on EL students?

Additional Resources

- In July 2020, the University of Wisconsin–Madison's resource hub, WIDA, published a [bulletin](#) focused on educators collaborating to serve multilingual learners.
- Massachusetts has an [English Learner Education Collaboration Tool](#) to help structure coordination between EL-specific and content teachers.
- The District of Columbia has a [design guide](#) that lays out collaborative structures for content teachers and ESL and special education teachers in elementary and middle schools.
- The Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) and Regional Education Laboratory (REL) Southwest offered a [webinar on teacher collaboration](#) focusing attention on teaching EL students in the COVID-19 context.
- The national website [Colorín Colorado](#) has published ideas for [how ELL educators can collaborate and co-teach during COVID-19](#) from EL scholars Andrea Honigsfeld and Maria Dove.

Strategy 2. Leverage guidance departments and related staff members to support ELs.

Develop online opportunities for guidance counselors and related staff members (e.g., school psychologists, social-emotional learning specialists) to collaborate with EL teachers in developing new approaches for addressing the socioemotional needs and general wellbeing of ELs during remote and hybrid learning.

Examples

State leaders may consider supporting districts and schools in adopting the following practices:

District administrators:

- Create collaborative webinars and professional learning opportunities for guidance counselors and EL educators to discuss socio-emotional considerations and culturally relevant, trauma-informed strategies that are specific to ELs in remote or hybrid settings.
- Establish communication channels that enable guidance counselors to share pressing concerns across schools for EL students and families during distance and hybrid learning and enable educators to develop appropriate strategies.
- Expand counseling support (where budgets allow) to address EL student and family needs. If hiring new counselors, consider prioritizing those candidates who speak the language(s) of EL students and families in the district.

School administrators:

- Develop schedules for guidance counselors that pair them with teacher teams and provide time for the team to identify needs and develop strategies to integrate social-emotional support for ELs into remote or hybrid environments.
- To the extent possible, assign guidance counselors' caseloads to ensure that EL students have access to counselors with appropriate language skills and culturally responsive expertise.
- During online staff meetings, engage guidance counselors and educators in setting culturally responsive and trauma-informed remote learning policies.

General and EL-specific educators:

- Acknowledge that EL students and their families may be experiencing additional stresses due to engaging in remote or hybrid learning.
- Ensure that classroom policies and expectations do not unintentionally exacerbate EL students' mental health challenges (e.g., requiring students to have their cameras on during class time, punitive attendance policies).
- Identify barriers to accessing mental health support for EL students and their families, and work with home/school liaisons and counselors to address them.

Scenario

Manny, a 9th grade English language arts teacher, could tell that the EL students in his classes were on edge, and several of them had not been submitting their work on time. A few EL students told him about the economic hardships their families were facing during the pandemic, which were exacerbated by restrictive immigration policies in their community. Others were coping with headaches from trying to engage for so long in English on the computer. Not sure what to do, Manny emailed the lead guidance counselor to ask for advice. She offered to meet with him to share some of the strategies she had learned from a district training session for guidance counselors on trauma-informed online instruction. He agreed to meet after school the next day and suggested that the other 9th grade teachers might also benefit from learning about these strategies. The guidance counselor agreed to attend their next team meeting to get a sense of the kinds of challenges the teachers were facing and to brainstorm about collaborative ways to meet the students' needs in culturally responsive ways.

Questions to consider:

- What role can guidance counselors and related staff members play in supporting school-wide efforts to integrate social-emotional support for EL students in remote and hybrid learning contexts?
- What district or school structures can be created in the online environment to bring counselors and educators together to collaborate and share culturally responsive strategies for supporting EL students and families?
- How can guidance counselors' caseloads and responsibilities be organized to maximize support for particular groups of students and their teachers, such as ELs?

Strategy 3. Identify and support home/school liaisons.

Proactively bridge home and school by engaging home/school liaisons who maintain regular connections to teachers and communicate with families in their home language using culturally relevant technologies such as text messaging and WhatsApp. Title III funds can be used to support the creation of these positions when they supplement support for ELs, and CARES Act funds can be used to augment communication with EL families.

Examples

State leaders might consider supporting district and schools in adopting the following practices:

District administrators:

- Develop job descriptions that address the expectations and responsibilities for home/school liaisons in remote and hybrid learning contexts.
- Translate job postings into relevant languages and work with administrators and community members to identify dissemination strategies (e.g., posting and making announcements in local organizations, leveraging local media).
- Survey EL families for their preferred language and mode of communication (e.g., text message, email, phone calls), and identify home/school liaisons who can meet those needs.
- Continue to allocate funding to support home/school liaisons, as schools transition between remote and hybrid instruction.

School administrators:

- Leverage connections to families and community- and faith-based organizations to identify individuals who might serve as home/school liaisons.
- Provide professional learning opportunities for home/school liaisons to become familiar with and share feedback on school policies and expectations during remote and hybrid learning.
- Structure liaisons' caseloads and develop routines that allow for collaboration among instructional staff, home/school liaisons, and EL families.

Home/school liaisons:

- Communicate consistently and frequently with EL families using their preferred languages and modes (e.g., text message, email, phone calls).
- Identify EL families' barriers to school engagement and any pressing concerns they may have and share this information with administrators and teachers.
- Develop routines to facilitate two-way communication between EL students' educators and the students' families during remote and hybrid learning.

Scenario

Corina, a 3rd grade teacher, was concerned that one of her EL students, Esme, didn't sign in for her online small group reading session on Tuesday and Wednesday. During her weekly check-in on Thursday with Betsy, the home/school liaison, Corina mentioned her concern. Betsy said she was in regular contact with Esme's mother and the other EL parents via "What's App," texting multiple times a week to make sure students had what they needed to continue signing on to their remote learning classes. Friday morning, Betsy emailed Corina to let her know that Esme had spent the week with her grandmother and would complete her school work by Monday. Corina made a note to follow up with Esme and her mother on Monday to address any questions they might have about the class work.

Questions to consider:

- What routines can be established to coordinate communication between home/school liaisons and the various teachers serving ELs in remote and hybrid learning contexts?
- What barriers might arise for home/school liaisons as they try to connect teachers with EL families across remote and hybrid contexts? How can district and school practices minimize those barriers?
- If home/school liaisons do not already exist, what resources can districts use to support this role? (For example: Can Title III funds be used to support this position? How can part-time positions be created? Can job responsibilities for some staff members be shifted to take on this role? Can districts support the community by hiring families who may have lost their jobs to serve as liaisons?)
- If home/school liaisons already exist, how can student-family assignments be revisited to provide the best 'match' in terms of language and cultural understanding?

Additional Resources

- Ishimaru, A. M. (2019). [*Just schools: Building equitable collaborations with families and communities*](#). Teachers College Press.
- The Michigan Department of Education and the Office of Education Improvement and Innovation (OEII) offers a [Guide to Becoming an Effective Parent Liaison](#).

Strategy 4. Conduct ongoing outreach to local community- and faith-based organizations.

Partner with community- and faith-based organizations (CBOs and FBOs) to facilitate resource-sharing, identify necessary supports, and work toward maintaining and/or extending learning opportunities outside of school.

Examples

State leaders may consider supporting district and schools in adopting the following practices:

District administrators:

- Establish connections with local CBOs and FBOs that focus on issues that are relevant to EL students and their families. Consider including home/school liaisons in these efforts as appropriate.
- Create an online, searchable directory of CBOs and FBOs, direct contacts, and relevant resources/expertise for teachers, staff members, and EL families.
- Develop interactive, online workshops so that CBOs and FBOs and school-based staff can meet and learn from one another.
- Consider partnering with local CBOs and FBOs that can provide facilities and technological supports during remote learning.

School administrators:

- Establish regular, online meetings with key contacts in CBOs and FBOs to share insights from the school and to learn from the community.
- Seek advice from CBOs and FBOs on relevant community issues and collaborate to develop solutions that address EL students' challenges during remote and hybrid learning.
- Consider requesting recommendations from CBO and FBO staff members for individuals who might serve as home/school liaisons.
- Invite CBO and FBO representatives to present information about relevant resources at online staff meetings or school outreach events with families, as appropriate.

Scenario

When taking attendance, Jesse, an AP History teacher, noted that two EL students on his roster had not logged in to any synchronous meetings since the quarter started two weeks ago. The family liaison informed him that these students' families may be worried about their immigration status, which might be contributing to the students' hesitation to check out computers from the school. Jesse sought advice from the principal, who asked the liaison to reassure the family that the school would protect their privacy and to encourage their children's attendance. The principal also reached out to the director of a local immigrant advocacy organization to learn more about the families' concerns. The advocacy organization's director explained that, although she wasn't aware of specific cases, it was certainly possible that online interactions could be monitored. She suggested that the principal

explore the know-your-rights workshop for educators that was being offered by the national branch of their organization.

Questions to consider:

- What insights and resources might local CBOs and FBOs have (e.g., access to community members, supporting basic needs such as food, clothing, and hygiene products, assistance with technology, access to information on immigrants' rights) that students can benefit from during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How can the district or school create and/or maintain meaningful relationships with these CBOs and FBOs to provide supports to EL students and their families?
- How can districts and schools reciprocate by supporting the CBOs' or FBOs' mission?

Additional Resources

- [Abriendo Puertas](#) has outlined family needs during COVID-19 and described some community-based solutions for addressing them.
- A recent [EdResearch for Recovery brief](#) focuses on supports for students in immigrant families. It describes a few approaches to forming CBO and FBO partnerships, including (1) partnering to produce translations of relevant COVID-19-related materials in multiple languages, and (2) partnering to offer homework guidance and other educational supports while promoting CBO and FBO services, such as live, online tutoring and homework assistance, with multilingual professional tutors.

Strategy 5. Expand language services for families.

Review available language services to ensure that EL families have access to appropriate technology with related instructions. Make sure families have access to schedules in their own languages, to enable them to interact more effectively with teachers and share responsibility for their children’s learning. SEAs and LEAs can generally use CARES Act funds for promoting communications with EL families, including translation and interpretation services.

Examples

State leaders may consider supporting district and schools in adopting the following practices:

District administrators:

- Build on existing practices to provide regular access to translation and interpretation services to meet the needs of EL families during remote and hybrid learning (e.g., develop an online tool for requesting services).
- Develop information sheets that list available language services and identify how EL families and educators can access them, and disseminate this information using multiple avenues (e.g., postal mail, email, text, etc.).
- During district-provided professional learning, promote the importance and value of communicating in the home language of EL students’ families.

School administrators:

- Communicate that teachers and other school staff need to make sure families have access to communications in their home languages and that the district can provide resources to support translation.
- Engage home/school liaisons in connecting EL families with available language services and strategizing with appropriate school staff members about how best to communicate with EL families.
- Ask school staff to identify new communications each week related to the remote or hybrid learning environment that need to be translated, and make sure staff know the process for procuring those translations.

General and EL-specific educators and home/school liaisons:

- Develop a survey to be administered online, via text message, or through WhatsApp for students and/or families to identify their preferred languages and modes of communication. Use the results to establish EL-specific communication practices.
- Identify the relevant language-translation services that the district/school can offer families during remote and distance learning, and incorporate them into home/school communication efforts. If translation services are limited or unavailable, advocate with district and school leaders to invest in them.

- Collaborate with other educators and/or administrators to create and share materials in EL families' home languages explaining how families can facilitate their children's remote learning.
- Connect with the families of EL students with limited participation in distance or hybrid learning, identify barriers to their participation, and work with other school staff members to develop strategies for addressing them.

Scenario

Erin was frustrated, because one of her 7th-grade EL students who regularly attended online class meetings had not uploaded any of her writing assignments. During a check-in with the ELD teacher, Erin learned that the family didn't speak English and often texted their home/school liaison seeking information about school events. The ELD teacher asked if Erin had provided a translated set of directions about how to access the online work-submission platform in order to upload completed assignments. Erin was not aware that district-supported language translation services were available; she asked for more information, so that she could better support the EL student and engage with the student's family.

Questions to consider:

- How can districts and schools minimize language barriers to help EL families understand the expectations, technical skills, and requirements for participating in remote and hybrid learning?
- What structures can support rapid, accessible translation and interpretation services for educators working with families who speak languages other than English?

Additional Resources

- An [EdResearch for Recovery brief](#) focuses on support for EL students in immigrant families. It describes a few approaches to expanding language services, such as providing access to "interpretation hotlines" or using translation apps when district translation and interpretation services are unavailable or in emergency situations.