

MTSS Educational Equity Brief

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Supporting Our English Learners

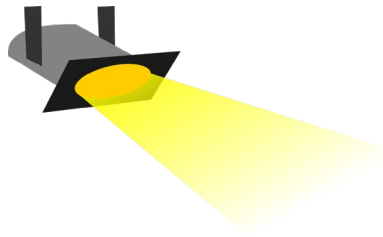
This *MTSS Educational Equity Brief* offers research, best practices, and resources that support our English Learners (ELs). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2016), ELs are an increasing part of the K–12 student population. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) states that ELs are now one of the fastest growing populations of students in U.S. schools. CCSSO recognizes that how states and school districts define this population of students varies extensively. However, CCSSO identifies ELs as language-minority students whose English proficiency affects their ability to meaningfully participate and succeed in school (CCSSO, 2016). As educators we must seek useful strategies to support them. We believe that the Vermont Multi-tiered System of Supports (VTmtss) Framework delivers an engaging and effective framework to support our ELs.

Rinaldi (2018) affirms that a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) can be particularly powerful in determining what kinds of supports are most appropriate for ELs. Some essential Strategies for teaching ELs include:

- Cultivating Relationships
- Modeling Expectations
- Intentionally being Culturally Responsive—learning about the Culture and Background of Your Students
- Focusing on Language Skills Across the Curriculum
- Emphasizing Productive Language that Uses Sentence Frames
- Speaking Slower—Then Increasing Wait Time for Students to Respond
- Differentiating Lessons to Include Multiple Opportunities for Students to Complete the Assignment
- Incorporating Students' Native Languages by Using Technology when Appropriate
- Engaging Family and Community through Effective Communication
- Knowing the Proficiency Level of Your Students and Adjust Your Speech with Attention to Vocabulary
- Providing Written Instructions (with Images)
- Continuously Checking for Understanding throughout the Lesson or Activity
- Defining and Explaining Vocabulary
- Allowing for Social Interaction as a Daily Occurrence with All Students
- Letting ELs Answer in their Native Language as a First Response
- Encouraging the Continued Development of ELs Home Language
- Deliberately Building in More Group Work

Best Practices

Movit, Petrykowski, and Woodruff (2010) offer insight on how a leadership team that is prepared to effectively address the needs of ELs is an important part of a successful multi-tiered system of supports. The VTmtss Framework offers a layered system of supports that encourages a culture of continuous improvement through decision making for excellence and equity. VTmtss encompasses five components, which are systemic and comprehensive approach, high-quality instruction and intervention, comprehensive assessment, expertise, and effective collaboration. VTmtss encourages the full participation of ELs in classroom activities and lessons. This may be done by designing engaging learning environment that differentiate instruction, where students have numerous opportunities to improve their language learning. Thus, empowering students to take ownership of their learning.



In the Spotlight

*A Conversation with Jim McCobb,
AOE Title III/English Learner (EL)
Coordinator!*

The following conversation has been edited for length, format, and space constraints. I am grateful that Jim took the time to sit down with me for this indepth conversation. His responses to some selected questions that I asked are below. Jim may be contacted at james.mccobb@vermont.gov.

Q: I know that we no longer use the term ELL. What is the correct reference?

English Learner (EL) is the updated term used in the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). However, the term English Language Learner is still widely used by practitioners in the field of English language acquisition.

Q: Can you tell me a little about the EL population in Vermont?

Students identified as ELs currently number around 1,700 in Vermont K-12 public schools. Compared to many other states, Vermont's EL population is relatively small (about 2%) in relation to its total public-school enrollment, but it has grown steadily over the last 30 years. This has largely been due to the successful resettlement of refugee individuals and families from many parts of the world, representing diverse language and cultural groups. ELs in VT schools also come from immigrant, migrant, multilingual, and adoptive families in the US.

Q: In what areas are supports most needed?

As soon as students enroll, they need to be promptly identified and screened to determine their English language proficiency level. Licensed EL staff interpret the test results and other info in order to plan and implement an appropriate language instruction educational program (LIEP).

Conversation with Jim McCobb Continues...

EL teachers and the students' other educators need to collaborate to support language development and academic instruction for ELs. The district/school administration needs to ensure that all educators have professional learning opportunities for working with ELs and that multilingual families receive meaningful communication necessary to understand and engage in their child's educational program.

Q: What is some practical advice/resources you'd like to offer educators of ELs?

As a member of the **WIDA Consortium** for 15 years now, VT educators can find lots of resources to support ELs on the [WIDA website](#). Educators who want to explore and understand the language multilingual students need to be successful in school should visit the [Language for Learning](#) web page. The WIDA website also includes many guides, briefs, reports, training materials, and other resources on a variety of topics, including: English Language Development Standards and Assessments; Instructional Supports for Language Development and Content Learning for ELs; Professional Learning; Research; and Family Engagement.

Click [here](#) to read more on the conversation with Jim!

Resources for Consideration

The selected resources below are provided for your consideration as tools that support educational equity for ELs.



- [WIDA](#)
- [6 Essential Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners](#)
- [English Learner Tool Kit for State and Local Education Agencies \(SEAs and LEAs\)](#)
- [Identifying and Supporting Gifted ELLs](#)
- [4 Simple Ways to Support English Learners' Comprehension](#)
- [Identifying and Supporting Gifted ELLs](#)
- [English Learners and Reading Challenges](#)
- [Differentiated Instruction for English-Learners: A Visual Guide](#)
- [Moving Toward a More Common Definition of English Learner: Collected Guidance for States and Multi-State Assessment Consortia](#)
- [English Learners: Charting Their Experiences and Mapping Their Futures in California Schools](#)
- [Evidence-Based Practices for English Learners](#)

Share Your Ideas with Us

We would like to hear from you! Please email us your best practice ideas taking place in your SU/SD or school around your VTmtss Framework and educational equity.

You may email materials, ideas, suggestions, or general feedback to Emma at emma.louie@vermont.gov.

Events and Announcements

MTSS Listserv

Please join the mtss@list.education.state.vt.us mailing list! Also, let us know how we can best use this listserv to support your work toward proving equitable educational opportunities for all students.

VTmtss Office Hours

Starting in August, please join us again for MTSS Office Hours the fourth Thursday of the month from 3-4 p.m. You may sign up to participate through the Weekly Field Memo.

VTmtss Modules

Please contact Meg at meg.porcella@vermont.gov with questions about login. [Link to Modules in Moodle](#)

VTmtss Field Guide 2019

Almost Ready! Be here soon...



References

- Linquanti, R., Cook, H. G., Baily, A. L. and McDonald, A. (2016). [Moving Toward a More Common Definition of English Learner: Collected Guidance for States and Multi-State Assessment Consortia](#). *Council of Chief State School Officers*.
- Movit, Petrykowska, and Woodruff. (2010). [Information Brief: Using School Leadership Teams to Meet the Needs of English Language Learners](#).
- Rinaldi, C. (2018). [Helping English Language Learners Succeed with a Multi-tiered System of Support \(MTSS\)](#).
- U.S. Department of Education. (2016). [English Learner Tool Kit for State and Local Education Agencies \(SEAs and LEAs\)](#).

We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://education.vermont.gov/student-support/multi-tiered-system-supports>