

A How-to Guide for State Title III Leaders:

Using the ELSF Guidelines to Improve Instructional Materials for English Learners

ESSA presents new opportunities

One result of No Child Left Behind (2002) is that states developed standards and measures for English language proficiency. Assessment and reporting requirements helped to foster awareness of the opportunity gap faced by English learners across the country. Despite the focus on English learners, most leaders would agree that progress has been slow. With the implementation of ESSA, states have the opportunity to renew the focus on the barriers that impede English learners. State Title III leaders play a key role in both explaining the challenge and promoting evidence-based approaches.

It's Time to Focus on Instructional Materials

The English Learner Success Forum (ELSF) believes that access to quality instructional materials must be a priority¹, and that well-designed materials will benefit both educators and students.

In recent years, many schools and districts have invested in programmatic changes, professional learning, and other improvement efforts. Many of these efforts focused on arming teachers with data as well as new strategies for infusing academic language learning into existing or new instructional materials. ELSF believes it is both more efficient and impactful to design instructional materials for English learners up front. Core ELA and mathematics instructional materials should present students with rich and authentic opportunities to develop language while learning challenging, grade-level content.

What are the Guidelines?

ELSF collaborates with field-leading researchers, district leaders, teachers, content creators, and education funders to improve the supply and accessibility of high-quality K-12 ELA and mathematics instructional materials that are inclusive of English learner students. As a result of this collaboration, ELSF has developed *Guidelines for Improving English Language Arts Materials for English Learners* as well as *Guidelines for Improving Mathematics Materials for English Learners*. These Guidelines can help gauge the quality of supports in existing materials as well as to identify specific ways to address gaps. The Guidelines incorporate the most recent research on language development and instruction and provide clear guidance and concrete examples for educators.

¹ [Choosing Blindly: Instructional Materials, Teacher Effectiveness, and the Common Core](#)

State Title III and English Learner Leaders: Multiple Roles in Complex Environments

As a federally funded system, state education agencies must protect and uphold the rights of English learners. In many cases, Title III leaders are charged with compliance, strategic improvements, technical assistance, and many other duties. In addition to all of these roles, what role can Title III/English learner leaders play in supporting schools and districts in evaluating and improving instructional materials?

The English Learners Success Forum believes quality teaching paired with effective instructional guidance is critical to the academic success of English learners.

Prioritize Instructional Materials as a Lever for Change

- Push for a Shift in Mindset: Instead of **simplifying**, push for **amplifying** the curriculum to ensure rigor and engagement for all students.
- Ensure that academic leaders within the state agency as well as people involved in guiding material selection understand the rationale for utilizing the Guidelines.
- Advocate for a stronger focus on instructional materials as part of comprehensive school and district improvement efforts, as well as Title VI projects. A great starting point is the Guidelines Inventory survey in [ELA](#) or [Math](#).
- Include ELSF Guidelines on Procurement Resource lists.

Fifty years after the passage of the Bilingual Education Act, it is time to create a better supply of quality instructional materials designed to build academic language, content knowledge, and critical thinking skills.

Connect Educators with ELSF

The English Learners Success Forum (ELSF) wants to support educators. Visit our website (<https://www.elsuccessforum.org/>) to access our Guidelines and our growing list of resources, follow us on Twitter ([@elsuccessforum](#)), or contact me directly at: cgonzalessuccessforum.org.