

# A How-to Guide for Content Developers:

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## *Using the ELSF Guidelines to Improve Instructional Materials for English Learners*

### **What are the Guidelines?**

English Learners Success Forum’s (ELSF) ambitious mission is to equip educators with tools for English learner (EL) college- and career-readiness. To make this a reality, ELSF has partnered with more than 60 EL experts from across the U.S., representing a variety of perspectives in K-12 organizations, to develop research-based guidelines in English language arts (ELA) and math to support Content Developers in developing and adapting instructional materials to be more inclusive of K-12 students learning English. The Guidelines provide key focus areas for Content Developers as they work to create a more linguistically responsive curriculum across units and lessons.

### **Why do the Guidelines matter for Content Developers?**

It is estimated that more than half of U.S. public school teachers have at least one EL in their classroom, but less than 20% are certified to teach ELs. Furthermore, ELs are the fastest-growing student population in the country. Most materials for ELs are focused on designated English language development classes, while there are little to no options for integrated English language development in standards-aligned content materials. There is an urgent need for high-quality materials that support both students learning English as well as the teachers who instruct them. Considering the needs of ELs should be an integral part of the materials development process. Using the ELSF Guidelines, Content Developers can ensure that English language development is integrated and robust throughout the materials and that they can have a positive impact on EL academic learning.

### **Assessing the current landscape: an inventory for reflection in [ELA](#) and [Math](#)**

Quality teaching paired with effective instructional guidance within materials is critical to the academic success of students classified as ELs. An important first step to strengthen your instructional materials in support of ELs is to understand how your content currently meets the needs of students learning English. As a starting point, use these [math](#) and [ELA](#) reflection questions to evaluate the quality of EL supports in your current or developing materials. Regardless of whether you are working with an existing curriculum, or if you are at the conceptual design level, the probing questions in these inventories can help you gut check where you already exhibit areas of strengths as well as emerging areas of opportunity in regards to supporting ELs.

## Building on what is already working: Areas of Focus and Specifications

The Guidelines reflect the fundamental aspects of language and content development and are organized by Areas of Focus for both [Math](#) and [ELA](#). Before developing or adapting your own instructional materials, first spend some time getting to know the Guidelines, paying special attention to the Areas of Focus for your content area. Using the five Areas of Focus as guides, identify trends that demonstrate alignment--consider this alignment as a strength and a model of what is already working in regards to supporting ELs. Using the reflection questions and these Guidelines, take some time to also consider which Areas of Focus might be opportunities for improvement within the design of the instructional materials.

Connected to each Area of Focus are Specifications. These include explanations, suggestions, strategies, supports, and models that demonstrate how you can make these Areas of Focus come to life in your materials. By leveraging these specifications, you will have very tactical ways to strengthen your instructional materials for ELs.

### Ready to Review? Pro Tips for Using the Guidelines

When you are ready to review your content, start small and look for trends.

- You don't need to review an entire semester's worth of content at once. Think about the unit or module level, and identify a cohesive learning sequence to evaluate.
- What Areas of Focus already demonstrate strengths? How can those strengths be replicated?
- What Areas of Focus are less evident in the materials?
  - Dig into the Specifications to deepen your understanding about how that particular Area of Focus can be included and elevated in your materials to give all students equitable access to rigorous, grade-level content.
  - This is also a time to reconnect with your answers from the ELA and Math Guidelines Inventory.
- Use the Specifications to adapt materials. Sometimes this is a tweak. Sometimes this requires major revisions.
  - For further support with adapting materials, watch the Webcast for Content Developers (coming soon).