

Additional Considerations for the Implementation of Empowering Early Literacy: A Guide to TK–5 Instructional Materials

I hope this instructional materials guide will prove helpful, particularly in the inclusion of writing, which is missing in many similar resources. The guide features many details and specifications which, while important, run the risk of losing the big picture of literacy development. Therefore, I hope district reviewers will keep in mind some big picture, student-centered questions and considerations:

- Do the instructional materials give teachers concrete tools, appropriate to the instructional language, to help students succeed by:
 - a. Identifying students' strengths and learning needs then building on strengths and addressing needs in a timely fashion?
 - b. Building students' oral language skills, including knowledge development and metalinguistic and other skills?
 - c. Helping teachers teach students how to:
 - Go from speech to print, i.e., connect a language's sounds to how the sounds are represented in print?
 - Access oral language visually (read and comprehend) and represent oral language in print (write and compose)?
 - Process written language (print) at the speed of sight, i.e., read and write accurately, automatically, and fluently, so that robust oral language skills (oracy) merge with robust speech-to-print skills to yield robust literacy skills, and oracy and literacy become mutually reinforcing?
- MLs learning to read and write in English need items "a-c" as much as English-proficient students do. But MLs have a more challenging task, which is learning English while learning to read and write it. They therefore need oral English language development to support English literacy development.
- MLs and English proficient students can become bilingual and biliterate in long-term bilingual education programs, a desirable goal for all.

For elaborations and/or disputations, please contact me at cgoldenberg@stanford.edu.

— Dr. Claude Goldenberg, Stanford University, Emeritus

As Advisors to this effort and signers onto this guide, we applaud the comprehensive frame of literacy that is represented. Offering a broad and robust framework for literacy, this guide focuses on reading inter-connected with essential domains of writing and oral language, and embraces foundational skills and comprehension as inter-related endeavors. Users of the guide should be aware, however, that several aspects essential for MLs will require additional guidance:

Materials for young dual language learners in Transitional Kindergarten cannot simply mirror K-5 approaches, but require the multilingual and developmental focus represented by the CA PK/TK Learning Foundations. Second, English Language Development is an essential element in the development of literacy for English Learners. While Integrated ELD is incorporated into this guide, it does not directly address materials for Designated ELD. Without quality Designated ELD materials that are aligned to, respond and prepare students for engagement with literacy in their ELA instruction, an essential component of literacy development is weakened for MLs. Third, while this guide recognizes the importance of leveraging home

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languages of MLs through a focus on cross-language connections, it speaks only to literacy development within English-instructed classrooms and cannot serve as an adequate framework for materials intended for dual language classrooms. In California, with a near majority of young children who come with home languages other than English, educators are encouraged to expand biliteracy options and provide materials that specifically embrace a biliteracy pedagogy for literacy instruction – preparing students with skills for joyous engagement with literacy for all of their cultural and language worlds.

— Martha Hernandez, Californians Together

— Dr. Magaly Lavadenz, Center for Equity for English Learners (CEEL) – Loyola Marymount University

— Dr. Martha I. Martinez, Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL)

— Dr. Gisela O'Brien, Center for Equity for English Learners (CEEL) – Loyola Marymount University

— Dr. Laurie Olsen, Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) and Californians Together

In the effort to ensure teachers and students have high quality materials, a detailed approach to adoption, like this comprehensive guide, should be taken. Checklists, rubrics, templates, and blueprints are provided to guide the process but, unfortunately, this usually leads to “curriculum bloat” as publishers attempt to satisfy the litany of requirements by adding materials that “check boxes” but also undermine any realistic opportunity for full implementation.

If student achievement is the North Star, adoption committees must prioritize the following things:

- Planning time required for full implementation must align with what’s allocated to teachers,
- Embedded, oral language development should be explicitly woven throughout the materials,
- Materials must have evidence of success from studies conducted by third parties,
- Materials must not include conflicting methods, and educators should be able to consistently plan for full implementation.

If the adoption process does not answer these questions, it undermines the quest for consistency and excellence while also underwriting an unproductive dynamic between teachers and administrators. Prepared, empowered, educators with quality materials can consistently promote student learning and achievement. Conversely, educators expected to sift through voluminous materials at home, are more likely to leave student needs unmet as well as burn themselves out of the profession. Without these things being in place, committees are “hoping” for success. Hope, alone, is not a strategy for sustained success.

To discuss further, please contact me at kareem@fulcrumliteracy.org.

— Kareem Weaver, Full and Complete Reading is a Universal Mandate (FULCRUM)