

Guidance for Remote Learning for English Learners

This past week the [Office of Language Acquisition \(OLA\)](#) and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released [Guidance on Remote Learning for English Learners](#) and [Remote Learning Resources to Help Meet the Needs of English Learners](#).

The OLA recognizes that student engagement may be challenged by the lack of in-person interaction that ELs may need to increase their English language proficiency. Additionally, educators should take into account the wide variety of specific and unique language acquisition needs of all ELs based on their English language proficiency levels. The recommended strategies listed in this document can help teachers continue providing ELE services and keeping ELs engaged while learning remotely during this period of school closure.

English Learner Remote Learning Strategies

Strategy #1 Collaborate

Core academic teachers should meet virtually with the ESL teacher with regular frequency (e.g., at least once a week) to plan their lessons and provide modifications to their lessons to best support ELs.

- When core content and ESL teachers plan their lessons together, content and ESL teachers can review and prioritize the lesson-level [language objectives](#) that ELs will need to support the content objectives at home.
- ESL teachers can develop their lessons around themes that support ELs academic language development, conceptual development and comprehension.
- Working with content teachers, ESL teachers can set objectives that are connected and consistent.
- Teachers can use videos or other virtual resources to link to the main lessons of grade-level curriculum. Some modifications to provide ELs access to the general curricula can include:
 - creating materials to complete assignments,
 - generating visuals to accompany lessons, and
 - adding other virtual platforms that support [accessibility and accommodations](#) for ELs.

Strategy #2 Provide Direct Instruction

- **Listening:** Students can listen to e-books or videos suggested by their teachers and complete the related work provided.
- **Reading:** Students can read books and articles from sources such as [Newsela](#) (provides articles on the same topic at different reading levels) suggested by their teachers and complete the related work provided.

- **Speaking:** Students can record their speaking using appropriate technology, talk with the ESL teacher on the phone or online, etc.
- **Writing:** Students can type in a virtually shared document, such as a Google doc, write and read it aloud to the ESL teacher or a family member, etc.

Strategy #3 [Amplify EL Voices](#)

ELs come to school needing more opportunities to practice English in a variety of settings. The more teachers can get ELs speaking, writing, and communicating, the better.

- Focus on what ELs have, not what they lack. Look for multimedia-rich digital tools that help students create their own content as a way to communicate and think beyond translations.
- Use technology as a scaffold toward more person-to-person communication by giving ELs space to record themselves, listen back, and re-record before sharing with others then provide them opportunities to work with partners or in small groups.¹ Lots of other digital-creation mediums can offer fun language-building practice, from video production to podcasting and digital design. Find something that suits your students' ages, language abilities, and interests.
- Give ELs an authentic audience for their work by having an audience of classmates, peers, friends or family to provide ELs experience with authentic, meaningful communication in the world.

Strategy #4 [Chunk Content Instruction into smaller pieces](#)

Learning online is different from learning in a face-to-face environment, especially for ELs. ***Teachers should avoid frequently assigning long text passages or even long videos to ELs.*** Chunking instruction, the act of intentionally pacing instruction to deliver one idea at a time or one step at a time, is a strategy that can significantly improve learning for ELs by making content manageable for them. In a remote learning experience, it is especially important to add visuals to represent ideas and provide online interactions by allowing ELs to discuss ideas to process the information learned.

Strategy #5 Remain flexible with pacing

Individual learning styles, particularly when it comes to pace and particularly for ELs, will be evident in remote learning. Consider these strategies for all students

- Have all work for the week posted by the start of the week and due at the end of the week (or even over the weekend). Be consistent in the schedule, expectations and communication with ELs to support families.
- Try working with “windows of time” instead of specific due dates for some assignments.
- ***Be prepared to differentiate due dates for students who struggle with the rigor or style of remote learning or just need more time due to their English language needs.***

Activities To Support Remote Learning Not Reliant On Technology

As Commissioner Riley has stated, “Remote learning can encompass a wide variety of learning opportunities. While technology can be a supportive tool, districts and schools should also consider ways that student learning can continue offline.” There are a number of ways educators can engage students in learning at home. For example:

- **Journals:** Teachers give students specific instructions on how to keep a journal of things they observe daily. Students can write or draw pictures depending on their English language proficiency level. Teachers encourage students who can write in their native language to write in their language.
- **Double Entry Journals:** Teachers ask students to read a book on a given topic. In one column, students write what they know about the topic before they start reading the book. In the other column, they write what they learned.
- **Reading Logs:** Teachers ask students to read books that interest them and then write a report. Then teachers make specific assignments as reading activities that align with the expectations outlined in the [standards](#) for the grade level. Students could have flexibility in writing in English, writing in their own language, creating posters or diagrams etc.
- **Role Play:** Teachers ask students to set up specific role play scenarios in their home. They can invite siblings and even parents to be part of the role play (while ensuring that this is optional and families have a choice as to whether they participate, especially if using videoconferencing). Students “explain the experience” and what they learned, what worked and did not work.
- **Turn on the Subtitles:** Teachers recommend a television program that is appropriate for their students’ age and learning level. Teachers ask students to watch the program with closed captioning. Students will hear the words, see the people speaking, and see the text all at the same time. Ask students to “record” what they heard and discuss with their teachers.
- **Learning Packets:** Some districts may have designed learning packets that can be mailed home, completed by the students and reviewed or discussed with the teachers. Based upon the review of the completed packets or discussion with students, teachers tailor future learning opportunities to their students’ needs.

Translation Resources

The English Learner department would like to share these short videos on how to use Google translate as a tool to increase engagement and provide feedback to bilingual families. These videos can be viewed by teachers to learn how to translate your class content and they can also be shared with parents who you feel may be having a difficult time accessing content because of language

difficulties. The English as a Second Language Teachers in the district are available as a resource to assist in determining which families have requested translation on the Home Language Survey.

[How to Translate a Google Doc](#)

[How to download Google translate Extension](#) (This has been pushed out to all Chromebooks in the District)

[Using the Google Translate Snap App on your Phone](#)

Conclusion

As you work to transfer English Learner in-person instruction to remote learning, it is important to remember that students enjoy and benefit from interacting with their teachers and classmates. Teachers can arrange student partners or teams, integrate creativity with projects, role playing games, simulations, case studies, debates, group projects, and experiments. Students need to explore and create to be motivated as learners.

Please be careful to not overwhelm students and families with having to learn too much new technology. Work collaboratively with your school or district level teams to determine the specific needs of your English Learner population.

The English as a Second Language Teachers in the district have been working hard to connect and work collaboratively with school and district teams to determine the specific needs of your English Learner population. The ELL department including Abby Steiner, Andrew Giambrone, and Katherine Lee, is committed to working with colleagues in recognizing and solving problems, finding solutions and in reaching out to our district resources for guidance.