

Webinar: Adapting Instruction for English Learner Students During Distance Learning – Perspectives from Practitioners

Supporting English learner students in pre-k to grade 12

A Publication From Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest at IES

To access the RELs' evidence-based COVID-19 response resources, visit <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/covid-19>.



View Webinar

Primary Audience: Teachers **Secondary Audiences:** Instructional Leaders and State and Local Administrators

This Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest webinar provides information and resources for adapting instruction for English learner (EL) students in a distance learning environment during the COVID-19 pandemic. REL Southwest provides an overview of promising practices and resources to support remote instruction of ELs and facilitates a discussion with EL specialists. The practitioners discuss ways that they have leveraged strategies and resources to engage EL students in remote instruction. They also explain how they have collaborated with colleagues and offer ways that local education agencies can support and build the capacity of EL teachers.



Evidence-Based Recommendations

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine identified promising practices to support English learner students in their 2017 report, [*Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures*](#) that served as a guide for the discussion.

Provide access to grade-level core course content

As with all students, first assess what kind of access families have to the Internet and whether students have devices at home.

- Remote learning might mean using new resources and developing new lessons or assignments.
- Ensure that new materials are aligned with grade-level content and standards.
 - Adapt materials and routines previously used in the classroom may be useful for maintaining continuity and student familiarity.
 - Develop assignments or activities that do not require technology.
 - Create opportunities for collaboration with English learner specialists and content teachers to inform both development and application

Support comprehension and writing related to core content

As students work independently at home, ensure instructions and materials are explicit and clear to help students to make progress on their own.

- Create a regular, consistent routine that reinforces content and language learning. This may be especially important for supporting their independent learning.
- Develop ongoing opportunities to assess student understanding (polling students during live instruction



or through a shared message board) and respond with targeted supports where students are struggling with content (provide videos to further explain concepts or language).

- Continue to use graphic organizers, pictures, and strategic translations as examples of visual and language supports to help students comprehend content.

Capitalize on students' home language, knowledge, and cultural assets

During remote learning, find opportunities to continue drawing on students' culture and home language.

- Make instructions and communications available in students' home languages.
- Communicate with parents to better understand home culture and student needs and to help build their skills to support student learning at home.

- Provide opportunities for students to connect schoolwork to their home cultures and languages. Use these opportunities to learn more about your students and demonstrate the importance of what they bring into their learning from home.

Use collaborative, peer group learning communities to support and extend teacher-led instruction

- Where live participation is possible, create opportunities for English learner students to meet with small groups of students to promote opportunities for content learning and language development in a peer setting. Consider strategic student groupings, such as mixing skill abilities.
- Consider structures and scaffolds to help English learner students participate (assigned student roles in a discussion, sentence starters).
- Reinforce or modify established norms for interactions to support respectful and productive interactions in this new setting.



Questions to Consider

- How do you ensure that all EL students have access to grade-level instruction, regardless of technology access?
- How can you ensure EL students receive feedback on their completed work?
- How can a district leader or EL specialists foster collaboration among content teachers and ESL teachers?
- How can you support EL students in continuing English language development during remote instruction?
- How can you adapt the ways you use students' home languages for learning, communicating with parents, or other needs during remote instruction?
- How can you foster communication with families of EL students?



Related Resources

- [*Quick Chat: Shifting Classroom Practices to a Virtual Environment*](#). Webinar from REL Midwest and Region 9 Comprehensive Center.
- [*Guidance for Navigating Remote Learning for English Learner Students*](#). REL Midwest Blog Series on Supporting Specific Student Populations as schools shift to remote learning.
- [*What are some specific practices used to support English learner \(EL\) students and their families?*](#) FAQ on meeting the needs of English learner students in an online environment from REL Northeast & Islands.
- [*¡Colorín Colorado!*](#) A bilingual site for educators and families of English language learners.
- [*Supporting Multilingual/English Learners during school closures*](#). Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- [*Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures*](#). Publication from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences funds a network of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs). Each REL serves a designated region of the country and works in partnership with educators and policymakers with a mission of supporting a more evidence-based education system to improve outcomes for students. In response to the impact of COVID-19 on education systems, the RELs collaborated to produce evidence-based resources and guidance.

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