Guidance for Teaching Literacy in Multilingual Settings

Skills Progressions: Foundational Literacy Skills

Transitional Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve



California Department of Education

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Using the Multilingual Skills Progression Documents

Purpose and Intent

California's Literacy Roadmap shapes the statewide approach to literacy and biliteracy, interlacing evidence-based and research-aligned practices that attend to the cultural and linguistic diversity of students across our state. This **Guidance for Teaching Literacy in Multilingual Settings** is offered in parallel to literacy guidance available for English-medium classrooms, adding both vivid distinction and subtle yet critical nuance to biliteracy instruction in multilingual programs.

Informed by research, practitioners, and subject matter experts, this guidance is a companion resource for transitional kindergarten through grade twelve (TK–12) dual language educators, including bilingual general and special education teachers, paraprofessionals, literacy coaches, and dual language education program leaders, to support the planning and delivery of effective biliteracy instruction and improve literacy outcomes for all students. While robust, this installment is merely a jumping-off point from earlier guidance, opening the door to further elaboration on dual language program implementation, including multilingual assessment, dual language education leadership, and more.

Rather than serving as a scope and sequence, curriculum map, or pacing guide, this resource intends to honor and reflect rich literacy instruction across many languages and multilingual education program models (e.g., dual language immersion, developmental bilingual, heritage language). Offering practical guidelines for making curricular and instructional decisions, the resource embraces the diversity of instructional approaches, time allocations, and culturally responsive practices needed to support the unique features of each language. Specifically, the skills progressions documents include augmentations for 15 different languages (each published separately) to specialize instruction.

Using This Guidance

The Guidance for Teaching Literacy in Multilingual Settings is designed for bilingual practitioners statewide. Educators should use this guidance alongside the California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CA CCSS ELA/Literacy), the California English Language Development Standards (CA ELD Standards), the California World Languages Standards (WL Standards), and the Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF) as indicated by grade span. All of these, together with related biliteracy resources, guide the following:

- Individual educators as they set priorities and refine their instructional practices.
- Team discussions on instructional materials and approaches, assessment results in both program languages, and acceleration, remediation, and needed interventions.
- Schoolwide and individual plans for professional learning, including coaching.
- Development of school and district biliteracy plans, including a Multi-Tiered System of Support, analysis of the implementation of instruction across all literacy areas, and selection of curricula and assessment instruments.

This guidance is to be used in tandem with high-quality, authentic biliteracy instructional materials; deep knowledge of language, biliteracy development, and culturally affirming approaches; an understanding of students' language and lived experiences; and other dual language and biliteracy instructional resources as a starting point for biliteracy instructional decision-making.

Appendix A of the Guidance for Teaching Literacy in Multilingual Settings contains **guiding questions** designed to support teaching teams as they engage in instructional planning in multilingual programs, with the goal of maximizing instructional impact in both languages while avoiding redundancy.

By integrating oral language development, foundational literacy skills, reading comprehension and writing instruction, and cross-linguistic pedagogy, teachers empower students to succeed academically while honoring their linguistic and cultural assets. In this way, multilingual literacy instruction not only supports academic achievement but also advances equity and prepares students for participation in an increasingly interconnected world (García and Kleyn 2016; California Department of Education 2020).

Organization of This Guidance

The centerpiece of this guidance is a series of four skills progressions documents. Each document is arranged by grade spans to assist educators in identifying a general entry point to their biliteracy instructional planning. Students bring a range of existing language and literacy experiences in English and the partner language, and their developmental characteristics and contexts shape their biliteracy learning trajectories. As a result, students in a given year will have different entry points, and it is up to educators to understand precisely each student's strengths and needs with respect to literacy skills in the languages of instruction.

The skills progressions are organized into the following **Core Areas of Literacy in Multilingual Programs**:

- Oral Language and Academic Discourse
- Foundational Literacy Skills
- Reading
- Writing

In addition to addressing the core areas of literacy, the progressions documents also feature:

- **Grade Spans:** Understanding that students develop literacy in two languages at different rates, the progressions are arranged by grade spans to provide practitioners a “mile marker” to determine where a student might enter the progressions. This also allows practitioners to look across, beyond, or before the span associated with particular grade levels for various skills to plan differentiation. Grade spans represented are TK–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12.
- **What Students Do:** Skill progression descriptions aligned to the standards indicate how students develop biliteracy and academic skills over time.
- **Evidence-Based Strategies:** Examples of evidence-based instructional strategies are provided that support multilingual learners across grade spans, levels of language and literacy development, and program models.
- **Standards:** Standards are provided to highlight anticipated learning outcomes and to assist time-constrained bilingual teachers who often develop much of their own curricula and must identify literacy learning milestones. Additionally, the skills progression documents that support Spanish and English instruction include two additional resources: the California Common Core en Español and the California Spanish Language Development Standards (CA SLD Standards).
- **Language Considerations:** Strategies and linguistic features are provided to assist educators in understanding and teaching the languages most prominently represented in dual language education programs in California, including Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Arabic, Hebrew, Russian, Ukrainian, Mixtec, Hmong, Khmer, Portuguese, and Filipino. Skills progression documents in the various languages are available via the California Department of Education Literacy Roadmap web page.

Each skills progression document focuses on one language in the Language Considerations column.

The Literacy Roadmap web page includes these Skills Progression documents, the Illustrative Multilingual Literacy Scenarios, study guides, a glossary, and the research and references that support the guidance. These can be used with adopted curricula to support biliteracy instruction.

Skills Progressions: Foundational Literacy Skills

Fundamental to reading and writing is the capacity to decode and encode—interpreting and applying understanding of the relationships between sounds and morphemes from written symbols—with automaticity and fluency to support meaning-making. In multilingual programs, this entails developing capacities in both languages through intentional planning, explicit teaching, and applied practice in each language. In biliteracy instruction, a well-defined framework for foundational literacy skills contributes to the efficient development of reading and writing skills. Looking to the relationship between the sound-symbol correspondences in the program languages (letters, characters, symbols, sounds, tones, words, etc.) enables multilingual educators to leverage elements that transfer, such as some phonological and morphological connections between English and Spanish, and contrast linguistic features that are different, such as the English alphabet and Cantonese characters.

It is imperative to note that foundational literacy skills—including, but not limited to, print concepts, phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency—in multilingual programs are not delayed for introduction by years. Rather, multilingual educators use explicit, systematic instruction, including cross-linguistic connections, as well as incidental learning opportunities, to introduce, teach, reteach, and practice skills in both languages with intention beginning in the earliest grades. In an 80/20 program, for example, the teaching of foundational literacy skills in the partner language does not come at the expense of introducing foundational literacy skills in English. Instead, the teaching of foundational literacy skills in both languages is prompt and complementary as some skills are taught sequentially and others introduced concurrently, based on a well-designed scope and sequence that begins early, with application of foundational literacy skills integrated throughout the instructional day.

Abbreviations for Standards

- **CA ELD:** California English Language Development Standards
- **CCSS ELA:** California Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts
- **PTKLF:** California Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations
- **WL:** World Languages Standards
- **CCSS AL en español:** Common Core State Standards Artes de lenguaje en español

- **CA SLD:** California Spanish Language Development Standards

Grades TK–2



What Students Do

- Students demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print as they progress from recognizing print directionality, identifying letters, recognizing sound-symbol relationships, and identifying word boundaries to understanding sentence features, including capitalization, spacing, and ending punctuation.
- Students demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes) as they progress from recognizing and producing rhymes, blending and segmenting syllables and onsets and rhymes, and isolating initial, medial, and final sounds in single-syllable words, manipulating individual sounds, blending two to three phonemes, and segmenting words into respective sequences of phonemes.
- Students know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words both in isolation and in text, progressing from knowing the most common sounds and spellings of consonants and vowels, reading common high-frequency words (as applicable), and distinguishing words by identifying the sounds of letters that differ to decoding regularly spelled one- and two-syllable words, reading words with inflectional endings, common prefixes and suffixes, and identifying misspelled words.
- Students move from listening to text read aloud to reading emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding, then to reading with sufficient accuracy, prosody, and fluency, to using context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

Related Standards

CCSS ELA: RF.K–2.1–6; L.K–2.1–6

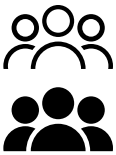
PTKLF: FLS.TK–2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5

CA ELD: Part III Using Foundational Literacy Skills

WL: Comparisons

CCSS AL en español: LF.K–2.1–3; L.K.2e; L.1.2f; L.2.2g

CA SLD: Parte III: Destrezas Fundamentales de Lectura [Alfabetización]



Evidence-Based Practices

- Ensure explicit attention to initial sounds, blending, and segmenting, with culturally authentic songs, rhymes, clapping/segmenting in both languages.
- Compare and contrast sound-symbol correspondences unique to each writing system.
- Connect phonics practice to oral vocabulary and comprehension with visuals and realia.
- Blend and segment sounds to decode and write simple words, always linking decoding to meaning in the language of instruction.
- Select texts that allow students to apply developing decoding skills while building comprehension.
- Use formative assessment to determine which foundational literacy skills have transferred between languages. Use bridging activities to teach for transfer where necessary.
- Identify and read high-frequency words in both languages (as applicable), supported with bilingual picture glossaries and labels.
- Use context, visuals, and oral rehearsal to make meaning while decoding texts.
- Engage in translanguaging to confirm comprehension (e.g., decode in one language, explain in another), leveraging students' full linguistic repertoires.
- Guide students in noticing transferable phonics patterns, cognates, and word parts across languages.
- Model how to apply decoding strategies while reading connected text in each language.



Spanish Language Considerations

- Emphasize transparent sound-symbol correspondences (e.g., casa = /kasa/) and digraphs like *ll*, *ch*, *rr*.
- Teach graphemes and their corresponding phonemes, including those unique to Spanish such as ñ, /h/, /j/ (e.g., ñ is its own letter and compare it to n; h is always silent; model the /j/ as a strong breathy sound as in jugar, jirafa). Compare and contrast sounds and symbols in Spanish and English.

- Teach syllable families and rules of syllabication characteristic of Spanish (e.g., predictable CV syllables, ma, me, pe, pi, lo, lu, ma-no, pa-to, li-bro; rule-based syllable division VCCV, car-ta, lan-cha, a-mi-go, pe-ri-to) and compare and contrast with English syllable types.
- Stress syllabification and accent stress rules. Differentiate between "*acento y tilde*" ("stress accent and accent mark"). Highlight accents for stress and the introduction of accent marks (tildes).
- Differentiate how irregular spellings are few in Spanish (e.g., h is always silent and no other letters are consistently silent, hola, humo) as compared to English (e.g., silent k, b, gh, w, knight, thumb, though, write).
- Differentiate that accent rules in Spanish, e.g., rápido, si/sí, el/él are written and consistent, and not written in English (record [noun]/record [verb], present [noun]/present [verb], lead [metal]/lead [to guide]). Thus, for some English words, the pronunciation is determined by content.

Grades 3–5



What Students Do

- Students know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words both in isolation and in text. They move from identifying prefixes and suffixes to applying their combined knowledge of letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology to read unfamiliar multisyllabic words accurately in and out of context.
- Students read grade-level text with sufficient accuracy, prosody, and fluency to support comprehension, using context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

Related Standards

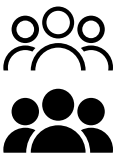
CCSS ELA: RF.3–5.3–4; L.3–5.4–6

CA ELD: Part III Using Foundational Literacy Skills

WL: Comparisons

CCSS AL en español: LF.3–5.3-4; L.3–5.2h, i, 4–6

CA SLD: Parte III: Destrezas Fundamentales de Lectura [Alfabetización]



Evidence-Based Practices

- Develop morphological awareness by analyzing prefixes, suffixes, and roots across languages; use these patterns to unlock meaning. Recognize and

analyze cognates and false cognates, creating explicit bilingual word lists with students to expand vocabulary.

- Facilitate word study routines that examine how meaning changes when affixes are added across languages.
- Build fluency with grade-level texts in both languages, with attention to accuracy, phrasing, and prosody to support comprehension.
- Encourage students to bring in words from home contexts to explore meaning.
- Make meaning by monitoring comprehension while decoding, using rereads, glossaries, and cross-language paraphrasing.
- Prompt students to use comprehension and vocabulary knowledge developed in one language to support understanding of texts in the other language.



Spanish Language Considerations

- Scaffold morphological awareness of verb conjugations (*-s*, *-es*, *-mos*) and derivational patterns (*-ción*, *-oso*).
- Build cognate walls to expand academic vocabulary (e.g., animal/*animal*, hospital/*hospital*, problem/*problema*, different/*diferente*).
- Differentiate how prefixes and suffixes in Spanish are predictable and phonetic (e.g., -ción/-sión, the pronunciation does not change; prefix in/im pronunciation is consistent and phonetic), and pronunciations in English (e.g., -tion pronounced /shən/ or /chən/; prefix in/im/il/ir can change spelling and pronunciation). Scaffold awareness that the syllabification changes that occur with silent letter digraphs such as “qu” and “gu,” along with their corresponding sounds (e.g., que, qui, gue, gui).
- Differentiate that multisyllabic decoding is rule-based in Spanish (e.g., VCCV split between consonants and vowels have one sound, car-ta, im-por-tan-te; ma-te-ma-ti-ca) whereas in English it can be unpredictable (e.g., na-tion, fa-ther, ba-na-na; wonder, color).
- Differentiate that adjective agreement is required in Spanish (e.g., el niño alto/la niña alta) and not used in English (the tall boy/the tall girl).

- Teach word formation with augmentatives and diminutives, and general verb conjugations (root + affixes to create verb tenses). Augmentatives make a word sound bigger, stronger, or sometimes more intense. Common endings: -ón / -ona, -ote / -ota, -azo / -aza. Diminutives make a word sound smaller, cuter, or friendlier. Common endings: -ito / -ita, -cito / -cita, -illo / -illa. Spanish verbs change their endings to show who is doing the action and when it happens. This is a way to show how roots + affixes create meaning (e.g., hablo, hablas, habla, hablamos, hablan).
- Teach applying systematic analysis for correctly using accents according to the stressed syllable in already known words, e.g., count the number of syllables; name the syllable that has the emphasis (última, penultima, antepenúltima); categorize the word according to its tonic accent (aguda, grave, esdrújula); determine the sound or the letter in which the word ends (vowel or consonant /n/ or /s/); write the written accent if necessary; justify the accentuation of words according to spelling rules.

Grades 6–8



What Students Do

- Students determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade-level reading and content, using context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase, moving from consulting reference materials to determine pronunciation, word meaning, or part of speech to tracing the etymology of words.
- Students, using common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots, analyze words and word families across languages to unlock meaning in complex texts by applying morphological analysis flexibly while reading.

Related Standards

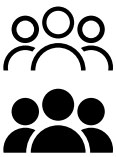
CCSS ELA: RL.6–8.4; RI. 6-8. 4; L.6–8.4–6

CA ELD: Part III Using Foundational Literacy Skills

WL: Comparisons

CSSS AL en español: R.6–8.4 L.6-8.4

CA SLD: Parte III: Destrezas Fundamentales de Lectura [Alfabetización]



Evidence-Based Practices

- Compare compound words across languages and texts.

- Compare how words for family, community, or values differ across languages.
- Provide targeted morphology mini-lessons tied to current texts.
- Engage in bilingual annotation of texts—marking roots/affixes in one language, then comparing with equivalents in the other.
- Prompt students to explain how context influences word meaning and supports comprehension in both languages.
- Engage students in word study routines that connect morphology, vocabulary development, and comprehension across languages.
- Teach students to consult bilingual dictionaries, glossaries, and digital reference tools strategically.



Spanish Language Considerations

- Expand the knowledge of word formation and morphology to determine meaning in complex texts (e.g., reconstrucción: re- = again, constru- = build, -cción/coin = action) with augmentatives and diminutives, and general verb conjugations (root + affixes to create verb tenses). Augmentatives make a word sound bigger, stronger, or sometimes more intense. Common endings: *-ón* / *-ona*, *-ote* / *-ota*, *-azo* / *-aza*. Diminutives make a word sound smaller, cuter, or friendlier. Common endings: *-ito* / *-ita*, *-cito* / *-cita*, *-illo* / *-illa*. Spanish verbs change their endings to show who is doing the action and when it happens. This shows how roots + affixes create meaning (e.g., *hablo, hablas, habla, hablamos, hablan*).

Grades 9–12



What Students Do

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings. Students move from analyzing the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how language evokes a sense of time and place or establishes a formal or informal tone), to examining the impact of sound devices such as rhyme and alliteration on verses, stanzas, or sections of a text, to analyzing how specific word choices shape meaning and tone, including the use of analogies or allusions to other text.

Related Standards

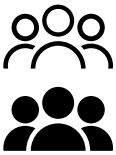
CCSS ELA: R.9–12.4;L.9–12.4–6

CA ELD: Interpretive PI.9–12.6; Productive PI.9–12.12; Part III: Using Foundational Literacy Skills

WL: Comparisons

CSSS AL en español: R.9–12.4; L.9–12.4

CA SLD: Parte III: Destrezas Fundamentales de Lectura [Alfabetización]



Evidence-Based Practices

- Guide students in comparing figurative language, idioms, and culturally specific expressions across languages and discussing how meaning shifts in translation.
- Engage students in analyzing cognates, roots, affixes, and etymology to deepen their understanding of sophisticated academic and literary vocabulary.
- Make meaning by synthesizing how vocabulary evolved across languages, building depth in academic usage.
- Encourage students to draw on knowledge developed in one language to interpret sophisticated vocabulary and literary language in the other while recognizing language-specific nuances.
- Model how academic vocabulary intersects with heritage and cultural identity.
- Keep dual-language etymology journals, tracing terms across English and partner languages, then present findings bilingually.



Spanish Language Considerations

- Point out etymology and origin of word formation by connecting roots and affixes across languages from its origin (*Latin, Greek*) and meaning, e.g., prefix a-, an- (*negación, falta de*): *apatía, amorfo, anestesia, anarquía*; suffix *-logía* (Latin = *estudio de*): *biología, tecnología, psicología*.