Guidance for Teaching Literacy in Multilingual Settings

Skills Progressions: Reading

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: Reading

Literacy instruction includes exposure to authentic texts in both languages, developing strategies for making meaning, evaluating arguments, and synthesizing across languages (Goldenberg 2008). Students read varied texts across program languages for different purposes—developing their capacities as readers, learning about content, the world, and themselves. They engage in read-alouds, read with support, and read independently, becoming confident, skilled readers of informational texts, such as primary sources, articles, arguments, textbooks, and podcast transcripts, and literary texts, such as narrative fiction or nonfiction, poetry, drama, and prose. Students read texts in both languages, including those originating from native-speaking countries of the partner language for cross-cultural relevance. Each phase of literacy development invites the use of different texts for different purposes, such as wordless books, predictable text, decodable readers, and texts across genres on various themes and subjects across a range of grade levels in each program language. This may include multilingual text sets on a unit of instruction with cross-text connections. Multilingual programs require access to abundant high-quality classroom and school library resources in the program languages to enable daily engagement with text across content areas, providing students with the opportunity to grow and use their developing multiliteracy capacities.

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 progress from attending to read-alouds, to actively engaging in group reading experiences, and then to reading and comprehending literature and informational grade-level text by accessing prior knowledge and using illustrations and contexts to make predictions and construct meaning.
- Students move from communicating about texts to asking and answering questions, retelling stories, and describing characters, settings, and events using key details and textual evidence to explain their understanding.
- Students progress from demonstrating interest in and engaging with literacy activities to understanding and using a range of text structures and features to locate information and support comprehension across a variety of stories.

Related Standards

CCSS ELA: RL/RI. K–2.1–10

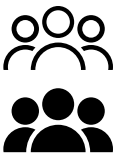
PTKLF: R.TK–3.2, 3.3

CA ELD: Interpretive PI. K–2.5–7; Structuring Cohesive Texts PII.K–2.1

WL: Interpretive, Communication

CSSS AL en español: LL. K–2. 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10; LI.K. 2, 3, 7–10; 1–2.2, 3, 5-10; LF. K–2.4

CA SLD: Interpretativo PI.K–2.5–7; Estructurar Textos Cohesivos PII.K–2.1



Evidence-Based Practices

- Use bilingual read-alouds and side-by-side bilingual texts featuring culturally diverse characters and themes.
- Build predictable retelling routines using visual story maps and sentence frames to support sequencing and structure in either or both languages.
- Model retelling in the language of instruction while highlighting crosslinguistic connections (e.g., *first/primero*). Students may rehearse ideas in either language before retelling the story.
- Model read-alouds in expressive reading for sentence intonation (expressing feelings, context, and tone [interrogative, exclamative]). Students can use echo reading to mimic basic intonation/tone.

- Use story maps and graphic organizers in one or both languages to support retelling, asking questions, and identifying evidence in text.
- Provide bilingual sentence frames for explaining thinking with evidence.
- Facilitate discussions before, during, and after reading to strengthen comprehension across languages.
- Model analyzing characters with text evidence in the partner language while allowing brainstorming in either language.
- Use bilingual trait/emotion charts and organizers to track character change and discuss big ideas or lessons across languages.
- Invite students to share cultural experiences that connect to stories.



Spanish Language Considerations

- Teach students to identify verb tenses in Spanish and English knowing that Spanish uses verb endings to show tense (ella corre—ella corrió) and English often changes the whole verb (runs—ran); both use time words to identify tense (Yo juego ahora/I play now) signaling present tense; and Spanish verb endings change more dramatically than English (Yo jugué ayer/I played yesterday) where the ending -é in Spanish and the ending –ed, plus the time word, in English signal past tense.
- Highlight pronouns and how English relies on them more heavily, (e.g., Comieron galletas—the verb ending –ieron already tells us the pronoun is “they”; They ate cookies—in English the pronoun is required and the pronoun “they” must be stated).
- Teach high-frequency vocabulary that TK and kindergarten students can use to talk about stories (e.g., Characters: niño, niña, mamá, amigo, animal; Settings: casa, escuela, bosque, noche, día; Events: corre, juega, busca, encuentra, ayuda).
- Introduce in-depth vocabulary in grades one and two that supports more precise retells and descriptions (e.g., Character traits: valiente, amable, travieso; Setting descriptors: oscuro, lejos, cerca, frío; Event-related verbs: resolver, descubrir, decidir).
- Contrast Spanish and English sentence patterns when reading informational texts—Spanish (noun + adjective: casa roja; la noche oscura); English (adjective + noun: red house; the dark night).

- Model how English organizes information more compactly compared to Spanish, which is longer and more descriptive (e.g., Polar bears live in cold, icy places/Los osos polares viven en lugares muy fríos donde hay mucho hielo).
- Teach Spanish and English transition words side by side (e.g., Primero/First, Después/Next, Luego/Then, Al final/Finally).

Grades 3–5



What Students Do

- Students read proficiently increasingly complex literary and informational texts and progress from asking and answering questions about texts to referring to key details and explaining what the text says explicitly, and then to quoting and drawing on textual evidence to support ideas.
- Students progress from describing to analyzing characters, events, setting, and story elements using key details; textual evidence to describe, explain, and support understanding.
- Students progress from comparing and contrasting themes, settings, plots, and characters in texts by the same author to comparing how similar themes, topics, and patterns of events are developed across text types and cultures, and then to comparing texts within the same genre with similar themes and topics.
- Students strengthen vocabulary by using context, morphology, and reference tools to determine the meaning of words and phrases, progressing from distinguishing literal and nonliteral language to understanding allusions and the significance of figurative language.

Related Standards

CCSS ELA: RL/RI.3–5.1–10

CA ELD: Interpretive PI.3–5.5–7; Structuring Cohesive Texts PII.3–5.1–2

WL: Interpretive Communication, Connections

CSSS AL en Español: LL.3–5.1–7, 9, 10; LI.3–5.1–10; LF.3-5.4

CA SLD: Interpretativo PI.3–5.5–7; Estructurar Textos Cohesivos PII.3–5.1–2

Evidence-Based Practices

- Continue teaching cognate/false cognate strategies. Use cognates and glossaries to develop comprehension and vocabulary.
- Select texts from diverse cultural contexts.
- Use story maps and graphic organizers in one or both languages to support retelling, asking and answering questions, and quoting evidence in text.
- Model summarizing and practice orally using key details in both languages.
- Facilitate bilingual discussions about how details reflect cultural norms.
- Provide **dual-language texts** focusing on a theme or subject to deepen inquiry.
- Provide opportunities to read and discuss complex texts in both languages around shared topics and themes.
- Encourage students to transfer comprehension strategies developed in one language to reading in the other.
- Facilitate discussion of how language and culture influence themes, perspectives, and character development.
- Encourage students to draw on knowledge gained in one language to deepen understanding of texts in the other.
- Model how to apply morphological and vocabulary knowledge while reading, discussing, and writing in both languages.

Spanish Language Considerations

- Contrast explicit vs. implied main ideas in Spanish texts. With explicit main ideas, the author directly states the main point, and students can identify the exact sentence. With implied main ideas, the author never states the main point directly; students must infer it from details.
- Scaffold strategies for distinguishing false cognates (e.g., sort words into categories, highlight the word in a sentence where false cognate appears in context, pair the false cognate with an image that shows its real meaning, think-aloud modeling, cognate families chart, context clue frames).
- Model reading aloud to help students hear word stress patterns and reinforce the concepts of aguda, grave/llana, and esdrújula (e.g., tráfico/trafico/traficó).

Grades 6–8



What Students Do

- Students independently and proficiently read and comprehend increasingly complex literary and informational texts and progress from citing textual evidence and drawing inferences to using multiple levels of evidence to support analysis, and then to selecting the most relevant and compelling evidence to support a precise, well-developed analysis.
- Students progress from determining themes and central ideas and explaining how they are conveyed through details to analyzing how ideas develop over the course of a text through their interaction with key elements (e.g., characters, settings, events, individuals), shaping meaning through text structures and specific features such as dialogue, incidents, and connections among ideas.
- Students progress from determining the meaning of words and phrases in context, including figurative, connotative, and technical language, to analyzing how word choice and language features (e.g., sound patterns, tone, and repetition) shape meaning, and then to analyzing how authors use structure, point of view, and word choice, including analogies and allusions, to shape meaning, tone, and purpose.
- Students progress from integrating information across multiple formats to develop understanding to analyzing and comparing how ideas, issues, and presentations vary across media, and then to evaluating the credibility, relevance, and effectiveness of arguments and claims, reasoning, evidence, and the use of different mediums to convey ideas.

Related Standards

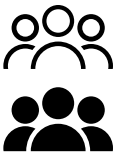
CCSS: RL/RI.6–8.1–10

CA ELD: Interpretive PI.6–8.5–7; Structuring Cohesive Texts PII.6–8.1–2

WL: Interpretive Communication, Cultures

CSSS AL en español: LL.6-8.1–7, 9, 10; LI.6.1–7, 9, 10; 7.1–10; 8.1–7, 9, 10

CA SLD: Interpretativo PI.6–8.5–7; Estructurar Textos Cohesivos PII.6–8.1-2



Evidence-Based Practices

- Use bilingual annotation and notetaking routines to track evidence, patterns, and evolving ideas.
- Provide bilingual sentence frames that help students cite evidence, make inferences, and justify interpretations. Slowly remove the scaffolding as students master that language.
- Provide opportunities for students to independently read complex texts in both languages around connected topics and themes.
- Facilitate cross-language and cross-cultural comparisons of the author's perspective/point of view.
- Encourage students to use translanguaging to identify and discuss how the author characterizes and describes characters, settings, and plots.
- Demonstrate for students how to transfer literacy skills from one language to the other.
- Guide students in creating graphic organizers that map relationships among characters, events, ideas, and text structures.
- Prompt students to identify cognates, word roots, and language patterns that support understanding of academic and technical vocabulary.
- Encourage students to compare how key words or phrases are expressed across languages and discuss how meaning may shift.
- Provide opportunities for students to support their point of view using evidence from texts in one or both languages.
- Encourage students to discuss how language choices shape meaning and perspective.
- Encourage students to integrate information from diverse linguistic and cultural perspectives when forming conclusions.
- Encourage students to integrate information from multilingual sources to develop and support their own conclusions.

Spanish Language Considerations

- Analyze and practice the differences between reading prose and poetry—such as text structure in prose and meter in poetry—and compare how these features work similarly or differently in Spanish and English (e.g., paragraph structure is similar in both languages, Spanish tends to use longer sentences with more commas and often follows syllable count, English often uses shorter, more segmented sentences and often follows stress patterns, Spanish uses em dashes [—] for dialogue and English uses quotation marks [“ ”]).
- Analyze informational/persuasive devices in Spanish texts (use of repetition, rhetorical questions). Compare the author’s stance across Spanish and English.

Grades 9–12

What Students Do

- Students independently read and comprehend increasingly complex literary and informational texts, seminal works of literature, historical texts, scientific texts, and technical materials. By grade twelve, they demonstrate college- and career-ready reading proficiency.
- Students cite strong textual evidence; analyze explicit and implicit meanings; determine one, progressing to two or more, central ideas or themes; tracing their development; and providing objective summaries.
- Students progress from analyzing how complex characters, events, and ideas develop and interact within and across texts to examining how an author’s choices shape meaning, advance the plot, and develop themes over the course of a text.
- Students analyze how authors deliberately structure the order of events and manipulate time to create effects (e.g., mystery, tension, or surprise) and progress to analyzing how an author’s structuring of specific parts of a text

Related Standards

CCSS: RL/RI.9–12.1–10

CA ELD: Interpretive PI. 9–12.5–7

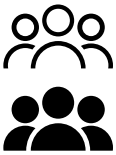
WL: Interpretive Communication, Connections

CSSS AL en español: LL.9–12.1–7, 9, 10; LI.9–12.1–10

CA SLD: Interpretativo PI.912.5–7

(e.g., beginning or end) shapes overall meaning and influences the reader's experience.

- Students analyze and compare multiple accounts of a subject across diverse sources, media, and formats, attending to how information is emphasized differently while evaluating arguments by assessing the validity and sufficiency of evidence. They progress to integrating and evaluating information from multiple sources to address questions or solve problems and to analyzing themes, purposes, arguments, and rhetorical features across historical texts.



Evidence-Based Practices

- Provide opportunities for students to read complex texts in both languages across disciplines and genres.
- Facilitate evidence-based debates using multilingual sources.
- Provide bilingual academic discussion frames that support interpretation, evaluation, and evidence-based argumentation.
- Facilitate cross-language reading experiences that deepen understanding of concepts, themes, and disciplinary content.
- Guide students in drawing on knowledge, vocabulary, and literacy practices developed in one language to support comprehension in the other.
- Encourage students to use cross-linguistic analysis to examine how key concepts, terminology, and rhetorical choices are conveyed across languages.
- Facilitate contrastive analysis of how authors use language, structure, and perspective to influence audiences across linguistic and cultural contexts.
- Engage students in research tasks that require synthesizing information from multilingual sources to answer complex questions or solve authentic problems.
- Encourage students to integrate diverse perspectives and evidence from multilingual sources when developing and defending their own interpretations and arguments.



Spanish Language Considerations

- Evaluate bias in Spanish-language media. Scaffold synthesis across Spanish and English sources, reflecting on cultural perspectives.
- Identify how different authors use Spanish in distinct ways and use those stylistic models to help students strengthen their own Spanish when describing situations, problems, and solutions. Example: differentiate between Gabriel García Márquez's (magic realism) syntax and language vs. Alejandro Zambra's "menos es más."
- Analyze how knowing more than one language allows readers to understand the text on multiple levels (e.g., A multilingual reader can notice nuances, double meanings, and cultural references that might be invisible to someone who only knows one language; they can compare how ideas are expressed across languages, which gives them a richer, layered interpretation of the text; and they can recognize when an author is playing with language, code-switching, or drawing on cultural knowledge from different linguistic worlds).