



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

Re-Entry to the 2020-21 School Year:

Strategies and Tools for Supporting English Learners

Part 1: Value English Learners' Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds

Tuesday, July 21, 2020

The social-emotional wellness of English learner (EL) students is influenced by the unique cultural, linguistic, and contextual factors of their lived experiences. Wards in DC that enroll many EL students have been affected significantly by coronavirus (COVID-19).¹ ELs are not a homogenous group and have had diverse experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to acknowledge the assets and resilience of immigrants economically, linguistically and culturally, as well as the value of needed supports, as people navigate a global pandemic in a language, culture, and education system which may be new to them. This is even more critical in light of COVID-19 and re-entry to school following distance learning in spring 2020.

Preparing your school staff to recognize and value ELs' unique experiences, strengths and needs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to will help ensure their success in the coming school year.

Strategy: Train all teachers on culturally-responsive approaches to supporting EL students' wellbeing.

When educators and staff understand the experiences that are unique to EL students, they are better prepared to cultivate positive relationships.

LEAs should train or retrain all staff on:

- The process for referring EL students to counselors including awareness around the potential need for counseling in the student or parent's native language,
- Socio-cultural considerations for EL students,
- Culturally responsive pedagogy, and
- The legal rights of immigrant students, including those who may be undocumented.

EL students and their families may have faced significant economic and health stressors during distance learning. Some students may be reluctant to share about their experiences during COVID-19, while others may be eager to discuss. Some families may still prioritize their physiological and safety needs and are not yet ready to prioritize academics.

¹ <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/page/coronavirus-data>

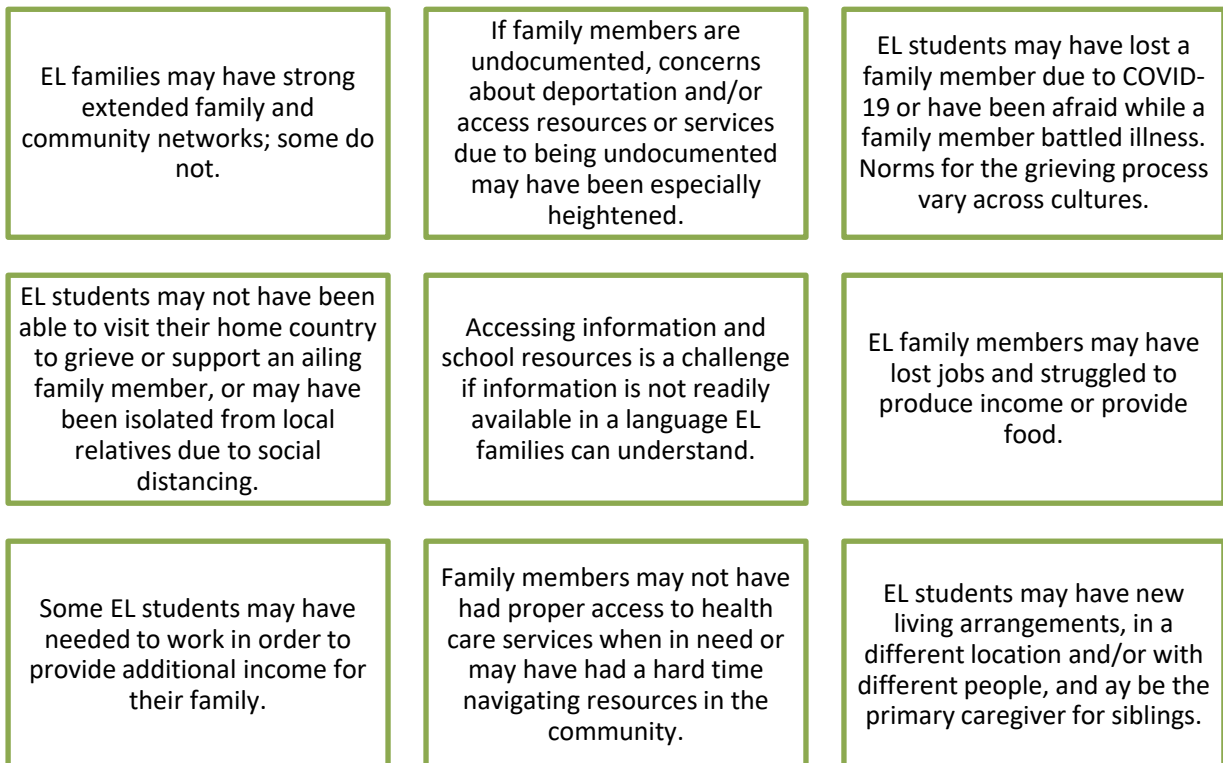
When supporting the social-emotional wellness of EL students to the new school year, educational leaders and teachers are encouraged to ask themselves:

- ❑ How are we working with our EL students to meet them where they are and integrate the resources they have access to?
- ❑ What assumptions are we making that prevent us from fully understanding our EL students?
- ❑ Are we actively listening to our EL students about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Reminders:

- ❑ Not all EL students are undocumented.
- ❑ It is illegal to ask students about their citizenship status.²

A range of factors that may affect EL students in unique ways. From family supports and documentation concerns to economic and health matters, the figure below shows examples of issues that may affect EL students' experiences, and could be particularly acute during the COVID-19 pandemic.



² [Immigration Resources and Supports for LEAs; Immigration and Rights in Schools](#)

Tools and Resources	How to Use
Pre-Recorded OSSE Training: English Learners and the Law	With a group, watch an excerpt (or all) of this training on civil rights laws and ELs. Discuss relevance of previous civil rights cases, the current context, and the effect on your students.
Brief Presentation: Keeping DC School Safe for All Families and Students: Immigration and Rights in Schools	Hold discussion with school staff to raise awareness of immigration and rights in schools.
USED Safe Spaces Fact Sheet for Families and School Staff	Post, distribute, and discuss with school staff and families.
Sample Student Reflection Tool Foldable Comic Activity (grades 4 and higher)	Model exercises with teachers, including modifications to create access for EL students. For example, for students at beginning levels of English, provide oral instructions and visual supports.

Examples Step-by-Step

Music to support socio-emotional wellness

1. Provide a definition of self-care, share one of your practices, and ask what self-care practices, if any, they do.
2. Find a short musical selection. Decide if your audience would benefit from an energizing (to get instant smiles) or a reflective piece (to work through emotions). Present guiding questions or supporting information before playing the music. Sample clip: [Washington DC Youth Orchestra Program](#) remote performance during COVID-19 pandemic. Listen carefully to the conductor as he provides background information about the piece. As the musicians play, you may focus on the scenery, on the musicians, or close your eyes and focus on the sound.
3. Guiding questions:
 - How did the music make you feel?
 - What did you see that was interesting?
 - What do you think it takes to perform together from home like that?
 - Can we apply anything from the orchestra’s endeavor to the new learning environment we may find ourselves in this coming school year?
 - How is the story behind Edward Elgar’s ‘Nimrod’ relevant to our lives as educators during the pandemic / you as students during a pandemic?”
4. Writing extension: These questions also make for great journal entries to activate the writing domain and to allow students time and space to reflect on their feelings individually.

All (W)in

1. The All (W)in facilitator should begin with a personal story of why they believe change by one can benefit all using real examples of what they have seen, heard, experienced. Show a collage of relevant images (Can adopt/adapt example in PPT).
2. Share past advocacy
 - a. [Mendez v. Westinister: Desegregating California's Schools](#): PBS video
 - b. [Castañeda v. Pickard](#): Castañeda Family Interview
3. Share current context
 - a. [Speaking Up Against Racism Around the New Coronavirus](#)
4. Discuss with students
 - a. Have they seen themselves represented in the current civil rights movement?
 - b. Based on the advocacy of ELs in the past, in what ways do they think they might benefit from this new movement?

Next Steps Checklist

I will help ensure the success of ELs this school year if I:

- Support teachers and staff to understand ELs' perspectives in the current context
- Create space in my lessons for students to express their COVID-19 realities
- Am OK with not having all the answers and solutions to students' challenges
- Establish a schedule of check-ins with ELs and with their families
- Identify the gaps in my knowledge about supporting ELs' socio-emotional health and seek out learning opportunities (PD, networking, webinars, books, etc.)
- Work with my LEA to continuously collect data on families' needs and ELs' engagement and collaboratively strategize supports

Summer EL Coordinator Sessions from OSSE's Division of Teaching and Learning

Register for upcoming sessions [here](#)

- *Part 2: Partner with English Learners' Families* Tuesday, July 28, 2020, 10-11:30 a.m.
- *Part 3: Provide Language Development and Academic Instruction Programs to English Learners* Wednesday, Aug. 5, 2020, 10-11:30 a.m.
- *Part 4: Use Multiple Data Sources to Support English Learner Students and Programs* Thursday, Aug. 13, 2020, 10-11:30 a.m.

Landscape of English Learners in DC and Vision for Success

- *Thursday, Sept. 17, 2020, 1-2:30 p.m.*