



**DIVISION OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, FUNDED PROGRAMS,
SCHOOL COUNSELING & THE ARTS**
Department of Language Acquisition

**Items to Consider as we transition to Educating
Multilingual Learners in a Digital Environment**

Across the United States, educators are grappling with how to provide virtual instruction to their students. This presents a number of additional potential challenges (e.g. lack of technology in home, unfamiliarity with technology for teaching remotely, lack of multilingual online curriculum) for teachers of multilingual learners. It also provides us with opportunities to draw upon the amazing resilience and ingenuity of our students to engage in deep learning online—to make meaning from online “texts”, negotiate different viewpoints, explain complicated processes, identify, evaluate and share multilingual multimedia resources across the disciplines, to name a few. This short document attempts to highlight some of the considerations educators should keep in mind as they plan and implement virtual approaches to instruction for their multilingual learners.

These virtual learning considerations are clearly not absolutes--what works for one educator may not work for another. However, they do provide a lens to consider as they adapt their instruction for online access. Note that in no way will online learning be a one-to-one substitute for the classroom environment, in which multilingual learners learn with and from each other. With those caveats in mind, online learning during these trying times can help multilingual learners stay connected to their peers and teachers. It can advance students’ own conceptual and linguistic learning to the degree that they are prepared to be fully engaged participants when they eventually do return to their schools.

Considerations as we transition to a Digital Learning Environment	
<p><u>PERSONAL CONNECTION</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider students socio-emotional needs to be preeminent right now. ● Teachers, counselors and site administrators can make short videos/voice recordings to share what they are doing while staying at home—reading books, playing board games, gardening, catching up with friends (virtually) or other hobbies. ● Videos/Voice Recordings can be uploaded to shared portals such as Google classroom ● Students can share part of their day with their classmates through video, chat or email. ● Review NYSED Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Framework for additional guidance and examples. 	<p><u>PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH OWN FAMILIES</u></p> <p>Families may feel burdened that they are their child’s only teacher as the interactions with teachers have changed. In order to avoid this, ask families to engage with their children in any language they choose in activities such as cooking/baking, making up stories, playing board games, etc. Also, see</p>
<p><u>FAMILY CONNECTION</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communication with families is CRITICAL. ● Use platforms such as REMIND APP and/or Class Dojo, emails, phone calls to communicate in your family’s language of preference. 	<p><u>LIMIT THE ONLINE RESOURCES-FILTER</u></p> <p>In order not to overwhelm families with lists of online resources that students can use, provide specific guidance and direction.</p>
<p><u>USE STUDENT INTEREST AS A HOOK</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask students to share ideas via video on how they currently use technology to learn about their own interests (music, culture, etc.). ● Consider using these student-generated sources (e.g. YouTube, Instagram) as a medium for communication and learning. 	<p><u>CHUNKING THE TEXTS</u></p> <p>Consider breaking up non-fiction texts into chunks and assigning different groups of students different pieces. They can share their learnings together in a group chat, video or shared document. Read Advanced Literacies Brief 3: Engaging, Content -Rich Texts</p>

<p><u>LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THROUGH CONTENT</u></p> <p>Remember to keep in mind what we know about language acquisition and content learning for MLLs. Read over the NYSED Blueprint for MLL/ELL Success and Advanced Literacies Brief 1: Advanced Literacies for Linguistically Diverse Learners and Academic Success for more guidance and examples.</p>	<p><u>MODELING EXPECTATIONS</u></p> <p>Provide short, precise written descriptions of an assignment connected to a complementary video explaining what they are supposed to do. Modeling sample responses can go a long way to help students grasp what they are being asked to do. Review Advanced Literacies Instruction</p>
<p><u>INTERACTIONS WITH PEERS/TEACHER</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Providing virtual opportunities for students to interact with each other in small groups/pairs to make meaning of texts. Of course, texts can be written or multimedia (e.g. a video on climate change). ● Hold a daily “office hours” (even 30 minutes) in which you are available to talk with students, check in on them, answer and questions that they have. Make sure that students know that their attendance is optional in these office hours ● Read Advanced Literacies Brief 4: Classroom Discussion. 	<p><u>TEXTS CHOSEN</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be mindful of the texts chosen. Avoid texts that contain many superfluous tangents, include unnecessary jargon, are poorly organized, and use metaphors and analogies that are clearly beyond students’ lived experiences. ● Always consider additional scaffolding supports that students will need to make meaning from the text. ● Reading Brief 2: Reading Comprehension for additional guidance and examples.
<p><u>THE USE OF THE HOME LANGUAGE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make sure that students can use all of their linguistic assets to learn. Yes, they can use google translate for web pages. But they can also use their agency to find primary language texts or videos that cover similar information. ● Have students identify and share videos in their primary language on key topics (e.g the water cycle). ● Having student engage in writing across the curriculum to promote students’ language and cognitive skills. ● Read Academic Literacies Brief 5: Building Written Language for guidance on building on linguistically - diverse student’s language and cultural recourses. 	<p><u>VOCABULARY BUILDING WITHIN CONTEXT</u></p> <p>While bits and pieces types of skill building apps might have a place in students’ daily routine (e.g. digital vocabulary cards), it is critical to promote students’ ability to argue, justify, define, explain, etc. within a variety of disciplines. Read Advanced Literacies Brief 6: Academic Vocabulary and Language.</p>
<p><u>INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus on depth, not breadth. ● Choose high level understandings and help students to see the connections across ideas and disciplines 	<p><u>COLLABORATIONS ARE CRITICAL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don’t try to do this on your own! Hold virtual department or grade level meetings for your own mental, social and professional health. ● Teacher group chats/check-ins can be used to share best practices and answer questions as well. ● Review with colleagues Brief 7: Instructional Units of Study and Brief 8: Language Production Projects for vertical and horizontal planning.
<p><u>SCAFFOLDS</u></p> <p>Provide students graphic organizers or guiding questions before reading so they can organize information into meaningful chunks. In this way, students can make meaning from texts beyond their independent level without understanding every word. Also see NYSED Scaffolding ELA for MLLs/ELLs and for Scaffolds for ELA and Math for Grades 3-8.</p>	<p><u>MAKING CONNECTIONS TO PRIOR LEARNING</u></p> <p>Underscore the relationship between the new content, language and/or analytical skills (e.g. argumentation and explanation) and what students have learned previously.</p>
<p><u>METACOGNITION and REFLECTION</u></p> <p>Ask students to reflect on what works and doesn’t work from them while learning online.</p>	<p><u>CELEBRATIONS</u></p> <p>Always celebrate any learnings, milestones, accomplishments, school-related or otherwise, with your students.</p>
<p><u>USING RESOURCES THAT ARE FAMILIAR</u></p> <p>Where established, continue to use technology that students are already familiar with instead of introducing them to lots of unfamiliar technology.</p>	<p><u>ACCESS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider internet and laptop access ● Determine needs by connecting to your students ● the district continues to discover ways to provide 1 to 1 access for all students.