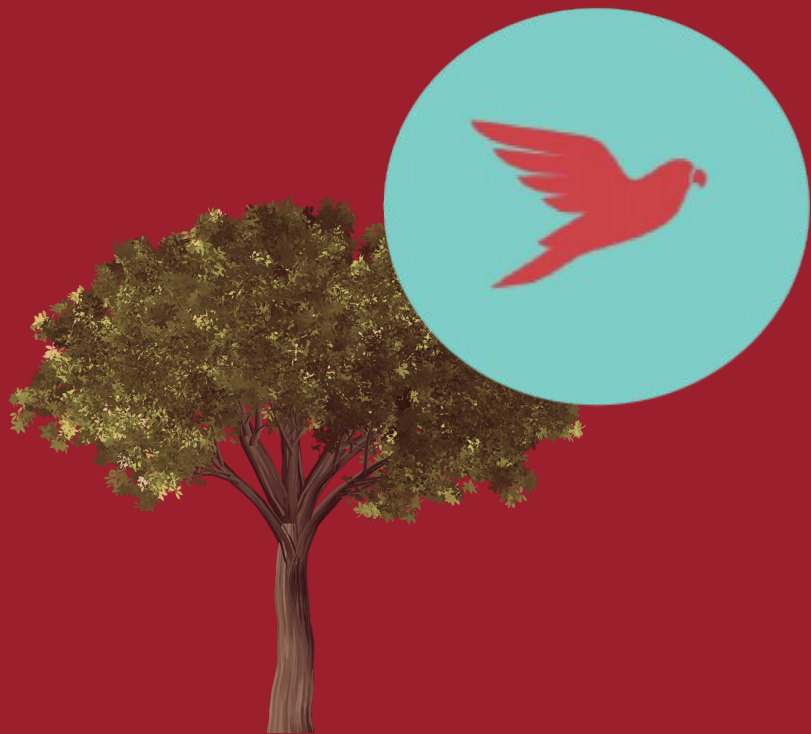


From ELM to SWEL:

Activating Teacher Leadership for School-Wide English Learning



WI TESOL Conference, 2025

Michelle Benegas, PhD
mbenegas01@hamline.edu

The 2014 Minnesota LEAPS Act



Senator Patricia
Torres Ray



Representative
Carlos Mariani

On the Shoulders of Giants



Ann Mabbott, Ph.D.

Professor Emeritus
Hamline School of Education



Me

Kid in Candy Store/New Professor
Hamline School of Education

English Learners in the Mainstream (ELM) Project at Hamline



The ELM Project was a five (six) year National Professional Development grant initiative, awarded in 2016 from the Office of English Language Acquisition in the US Department of Education

Two branches:

- Pre-service: Course for all teacher licensure candidates
- Inservice: Teacher leader training for licensed ESL teachers



- A total of 402 ESL teachers participated in the ELM Project over the 6 year initiative.
- These teachers worked in urban, suburban, rural, public, private and charter schools across the state.
- 958 mainstream teacher observations were completed.
- Unknown (but high) number of ELM Coach-led PD for mainstream teachers

Findings



The
ELM PROJECT
HAMLINE UNIVERSITY



ELM Coach Survey

Students Transfer Knowledge



The

ELM PROJECT

HAMLIN UNIVERSITY

*I can see that my students are having an easier time **transferring knowledge** from one space to another...if their classroom teachers are incorporating these pieces into their content learning when they get separate language instruction, whether or not it's on the same topic, they're able to see that there is a connection...*

ELM Coach Survey Student Confidence



The

ELM PROJECT

HAMLIN UNIVERSITY

*I have seen our **students' confidence** grow. I have seen them more willing to share their thoughts and ideas. I have seen their test scores gradually go up throughout the year. And I am very happy to say that I was able to see their MCA scores, specifically in reading, and was able to see the growth they had made from last year.*

Teachers really felt strongly that a lot of students, particularly EL students, were gaining confidence and when they gain that confidence they were more willing to engage. A lot of teachers previously would do activities like turn and talks and a lot of our EL students would just not participate in those... they would just sit there silently when they're supposed to be speaking. So the teachers felt like with designing some of these more in-depth activities and some assessments related to those activities that the students were able to participate more in oral discussions with classmates which helped them access the content so much more!

ELM Support Tool: Impact on Instruction



The
ELM PROJECT
HAMLINE UNIVERSITY

*In the final year of the ELM Project, pre to post observations analysis shows that **the difference in teacher practice was statistically significant**. The mean score for pre-observations was 8.97 compared to 10.27 for post-observations. This illustrates the professional development and coaching that continued with ELM coaches and teachers throughout the pandemic even without consistently being in the classroom together.*

Minnesota Stands Out in Tri-State Study



The

ELM PROJECT

HAMLIN UNIVERSITY

MinneTESOL Journal Article

*Systemic Infrastructure for Multilingual Success: ESL Teacher Responses to
Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning at the Onset of the COVID-19
Pandemic*

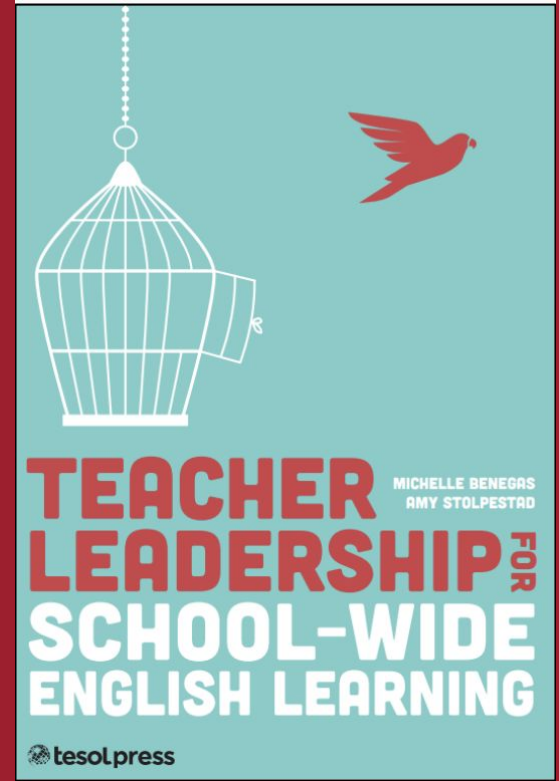
What is Systemic Infrastructure for Multilingual Success (SIMS)?



1. **Informed:** ESL teachers have robust preparation; general education teachers and support staff have continuous professional development on promising practices for MLLs; and MLL leaders have ESL teacher credentials in addition to years of experience in the classroom.
2. **Proactive:** Support systems are in place *prior* to a schooling disruption.
3. **Collaborative:** Responsibility for MLLs' success is shared across district/school sectors (social work, information technology, nurse, nutrition services, general education teachers, ESL teachers, etc.).
4. **Distributed:** Decision-making and leadership for MLLs are shared by a variety of professionals with MLL expertise.
5. **Responsive:** Support systems for MLLs are based on a continuous cycle of improvement and staff are provided ongoing professional development to respond to changing needs.



From ELM to SWEL...



www.tesolswel.org



WELCOME TO **TEACHER LEADERSHIP** FOR **SCHOOL-WIDE** **ENGLISH LEARNING**



School-Wide English Learning Co-Creators

Michelle Benegas, PhD



TESOL Faculty

Associate Professor of TESOL,
Hamline University

Amy Stolpestad, EdD



TESOL Faculty

Sr. Director of
Language Solutions at DRC



TESOL Staff



**Gracie Allely, MA Ed,
Doctoral Candidate**

Associate Director of Education
TESOL International Association



Gregory Stancil, MA Ed.

Professional Learning Specialist
TESOL International Association



SWEL Faculty



Stephanie DeFrance, MA ESL

K-12 ESL Teacher, Teacher Educator, and
Educational Consultant



Qurina Slayhi, MA TESOL

ML Content Lead
Minneapolis Public Schools, MN

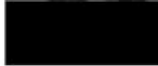


Jenny Leroux, MA

PreK-12 ELD Program Specialist,
Apple Valley-Eagan-Rosemount, MN



What is School-Wide English Learning or SWEL?

 asked a question  in **Leading**
 **ELLs.**
8h · 

Help!! I'm a first year ELL teacher and they are asking me to present a power point on supporting vocab development, making sure they understand content and supporting discussion and interaction throughout lessons in the grade level classrooms.

Any advice or resources that I should be looking into?!



8

8 Answers

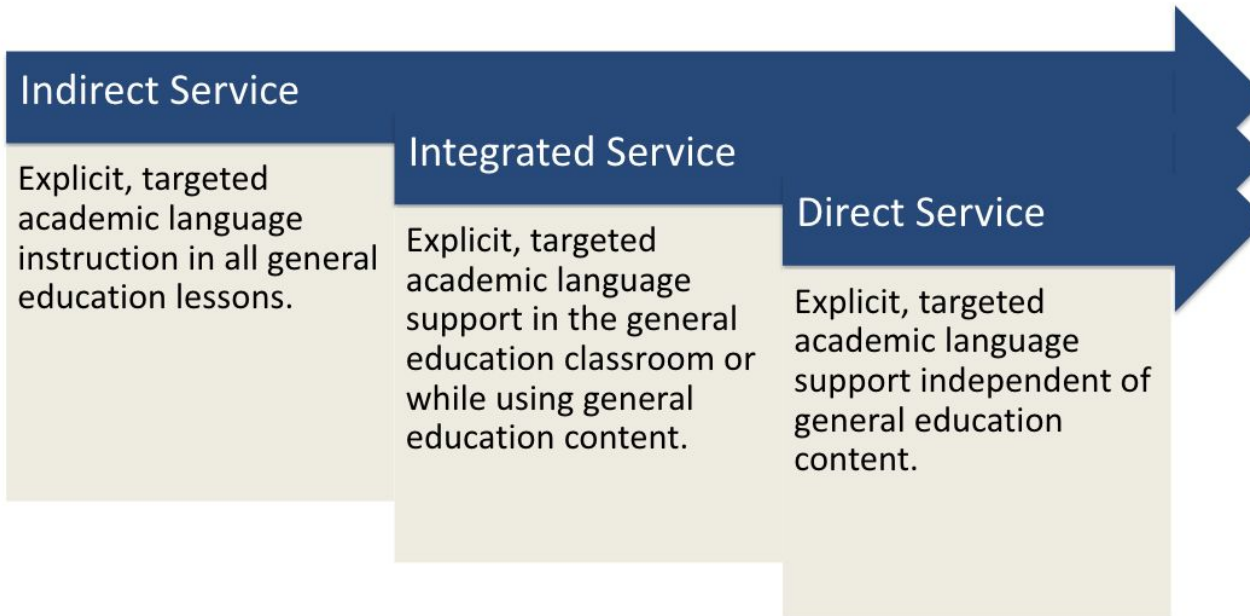


Like



Answer

The Direct-Indirect Service Model for English Learners: A Mental Audit Exercise





SWEL Coach Definition

EL coaches are teacher leaders who work collaboratively with their colleagues to support instructional practices that serve to improve educational outcomes for multilingual learners of English.
(Stolpestad & Benegas, 2019)



The Role of a SWEL Coach

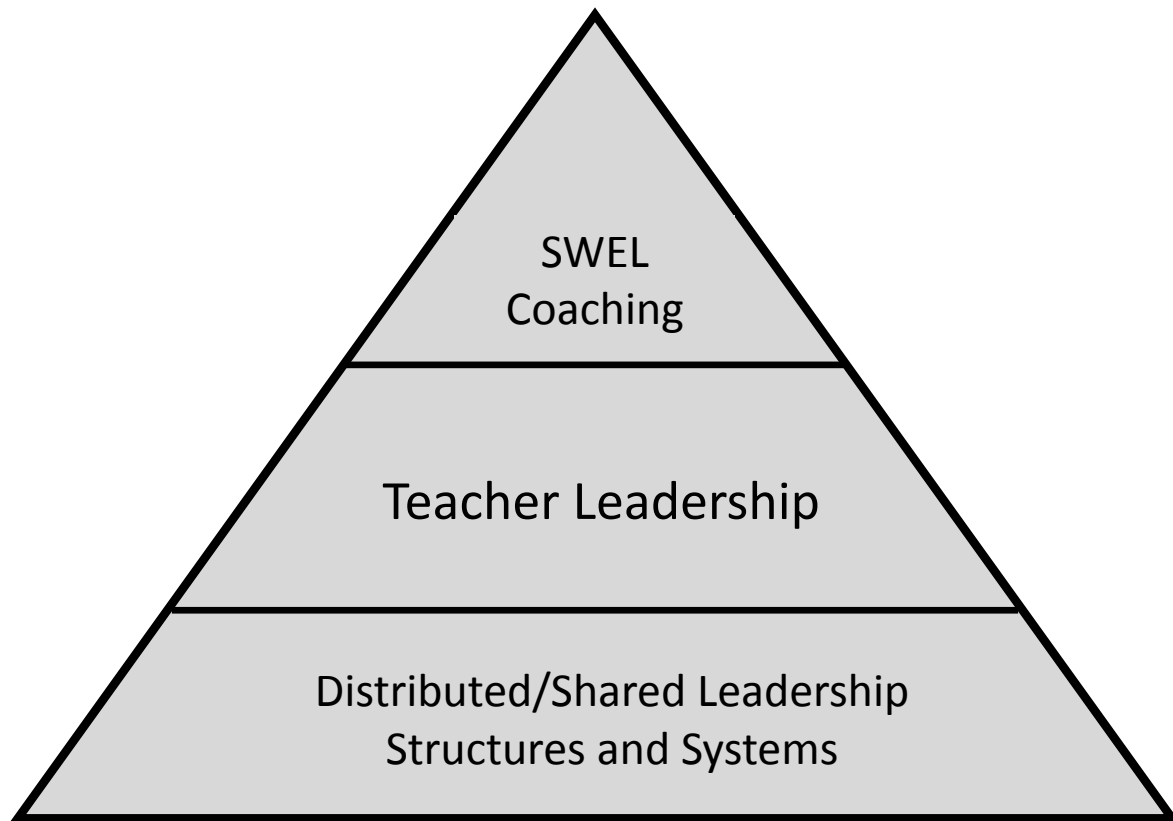
Facilitate professional development for colleagues that ensures language development is attended to in all classrooms.

Provide one-on-one and small group non-evaluative instructional coaching to colleagues to support language development in their classrooms.

Serve as a resource for administrators to ensure that curriculum, schedules, and program design attend to the needs of English learners.



SWEL's Foundation: Distributed Leadership





Distributed Leadership: School-Wide Rewards

Schools and organizations that use a distributed leadership model have:

- Less conflict
- More consensus
- More trust
- More cohesion

than teams that do not use a distributed or shared leadership model.

(Bergman, et al., 2012, as cited in Northouse, 2016)



Distributed Leadership: District and Profession-Wide Rewards

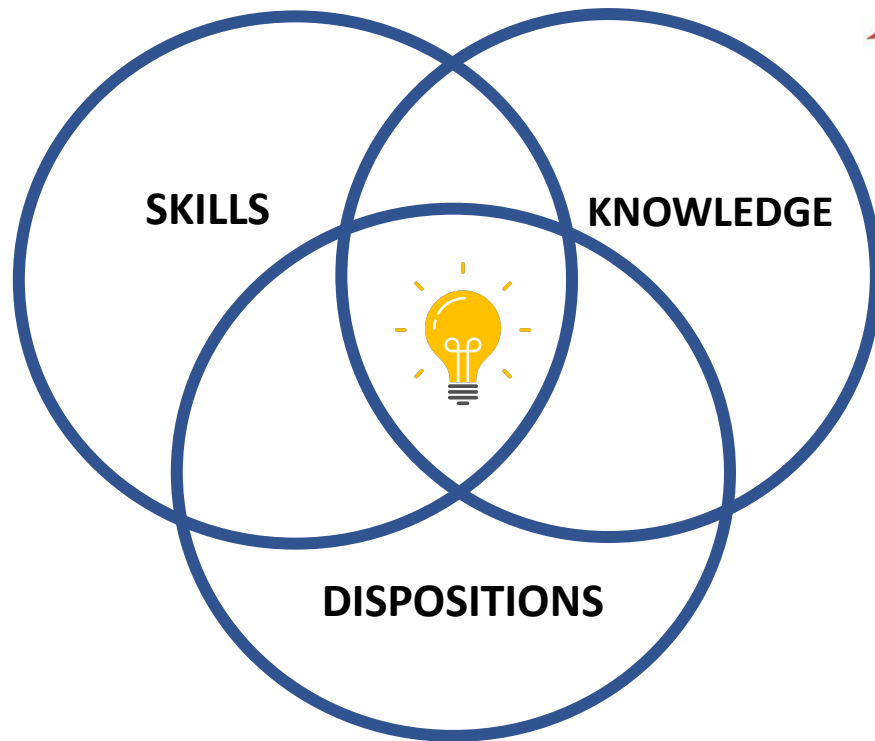
- Teacher engagement and commitment
- Knowledge, skills, and learning transfer and growth
- Recognition and rewards lead to retention and advancement
- Student benefits
- Recruitment and retention of Generation Z teachers

(York-Barr & Duke, 2004)



Dispositions, Knowledge, and Skills:

A Framework for Teacher Leadership





6 Dispositions Needed to Effectively and Respectfully Serve MLEs

1. Educators recognize the challenges of learning English and content simultaneously
2. Educators empathize with circumstances related to immigration
3. Educators are culturally sensitive and sustaining
4. Educators believe that marginalization and oppression affect the educational experiences of MLEs
5. Educators support their students' home language development
6. Educators are committed to ongoing professional development to improve their pedagogy for MLEs

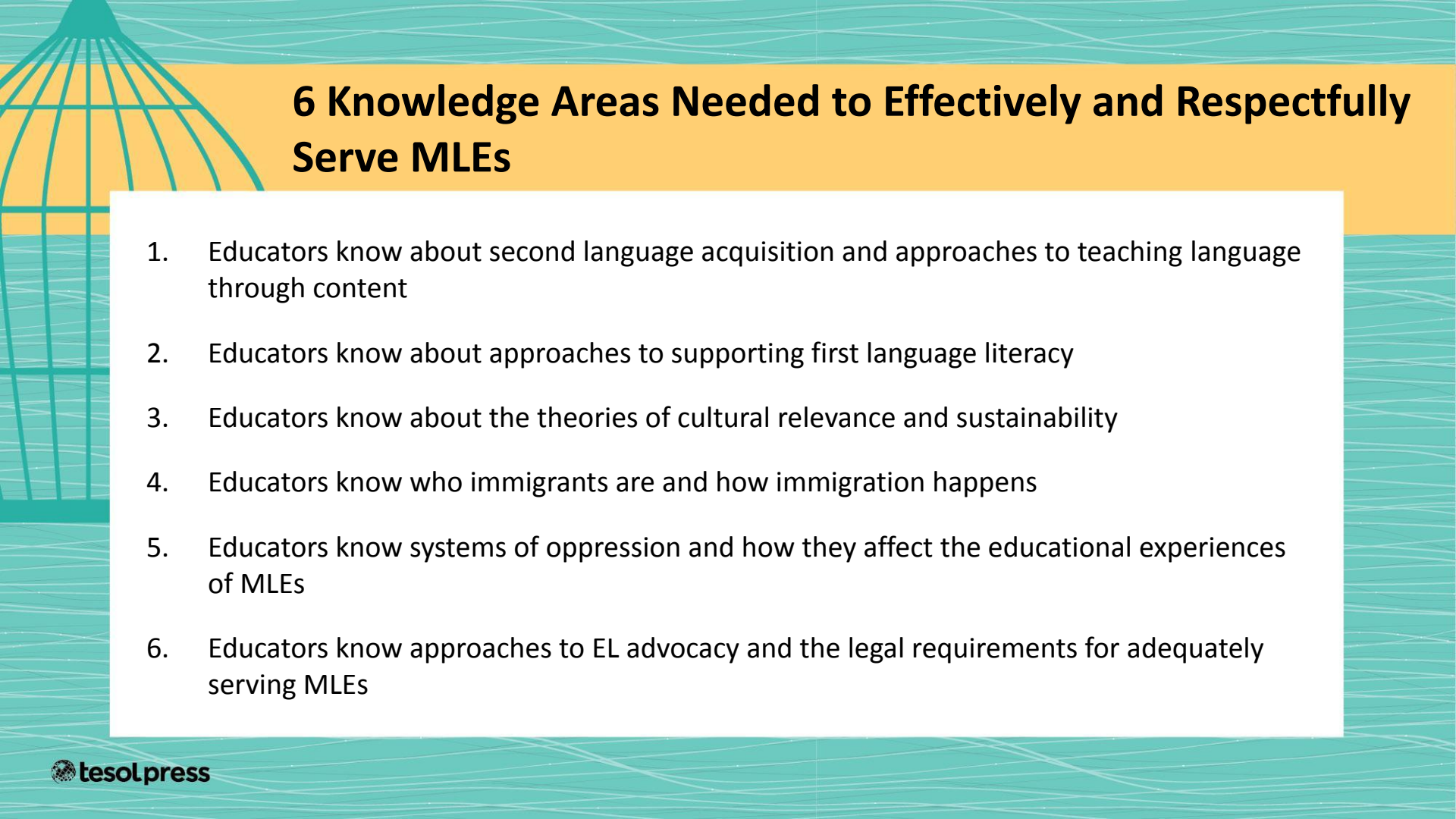


Think-Pair-Share

Take a moment to think about your school, district, or teaching context.

- Which dispositions for effectively and respectfully serving MLEs are well developed?
- Which dispositions for effectively and respectfully serving MLEs need to be cultivated?

Share your thoughts with a partner.



6 Knowledge Areas Needed to Effectively and Respectfully Serve MLEs

1. Educators know about second language acquisition and approaches to teaching language through content
2. Educators know about approaches to supporting first language literacy
3. Educators know about the theories of cultural relevance and sustainability
4. Educators know who immigrants are and how immigration happens
5. Educators know systems of oppression and how they affect the educational experiences of MLEs
6. Educators know approaches to EL advocacy and the legal requirements for adequately serving MLEs



Four Corners

As we read off each of the 6 Knowledge Areas Needed for Effectively and Respectively Serving MLEs, choose the corner that best represents the overall knowledge level in your school context.

The 4 corners are:

1. Expertise in this area.
2. Strong knowledge in this area.
3. Some knowledge in this area.
4. Very little or no knowledge in this area.



6 Skills Needed to Effectively and Respectfully Serve MLEs

1. Educators can plan for language instruction
2. Educators can teach and assess academic language
3. Educators can differentiate for MLEs
4. Educators can support first language literacy
5. Educators can enact culturally relevant practices
6. Educators can advocate for immigrant families



Reflection

(Kagan, 1994)

Take a moment to think about your school, district, or teaching context.

- Which skills for effectively and respectfully serving MLEs are well developed?
- Which skills for effectively and respectfully serving MLEs need to be cultivated?

Share your thoughts with a partner.

Professional Development Facilitation

*PD Plans: Flexibly
Designed Teacher
Professional Development*



1. Critical Incidents in Immigrant Education



Objective	Participants will analyze incidents in which cultural blind spots may affect a teacher's understanding of student behaviors and examine potential responses.
Time to Complete	90 minutes
Materials and Resources	Handouts (available on the companion site for this book, www.tesol.org/swel-leadership): • Critical Incidents in Immigrant Education Activity • Critical Incidents in Immigrant Education Activity Teacher Trainer Guide
Preparation	• Make copies of Part I of the handout and cut it into strips so that each slip of paper has one critical incident on it and make individual copies of Part II. • Optional: Prepare a presentation slide with discussion questions for Part III.

Introduction to the Activity; Background to Share With Participants

There is no single definition for the concept of a cultural blind spot. For the purposes of this activity, we define a cultural blind spot as an area in which someone is unfamiliar with the lived experience of another person because of a lack of exposure. We all have cultural blind spots of one kind or another. Keep in mind that one of the many jobs of a teacher is to be an advocate for each and every student, but that is difficult to do without reflection on

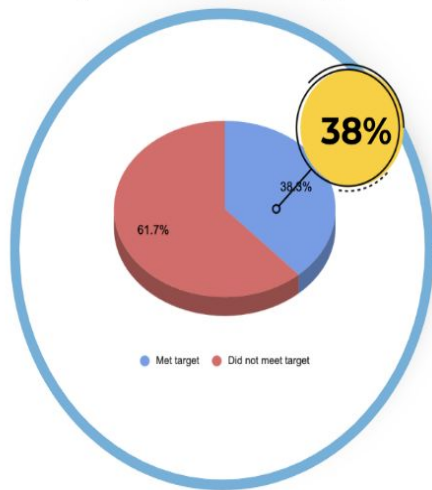


The SWEL Coaching Cycle

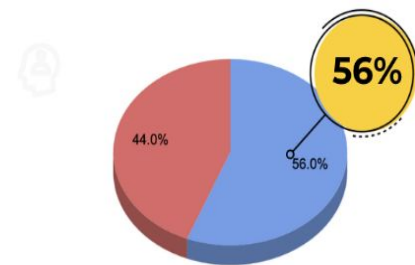
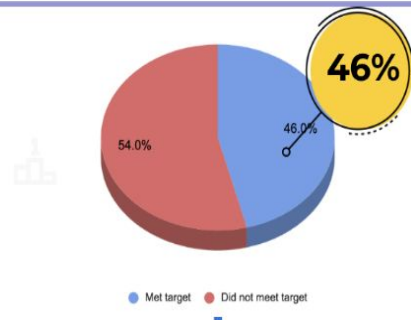


Preliminary SWEL Findings – SWEL Works!

Progress toward proficiency



District 196 - K-12 - SWEL Coaching Cycle



District 196 - Elementary - SWEL Coaching Cycle



SWEL Show-Off!

Celebrating
new
coaches in
Wyoming,
Michigan!

 Michelle Campbell Benegas is with Amy O'Connor Stolpestad and 7 others at Wyoming Public Schools. 4d · Wyoming, MI · 

Today we got to surprise newly certified TESOL SWEL teacher leaders in their classrooms to celebrate a year of working together to build systems of support for multilingual learners in Wyoming, Michigan.



  Patsy Grace Egan, Amy O'Connor Stolpestad and 182 others 20 comments

 Like

 Comment

 Share

View more comments



Kristina Robertson

Good for you! Love that there are so many people benefitting from your systems approach!

Love Reply 2h





THE SWEL SURVEY: A DIAGNOSTIC TO DETERMINE STAFF NEEDS

SWEL
Show-Off!

Fine-Tuning
Tools



<https://tinyurl.com/bdewr9zu>



SCAN ME

Created by SWEL Coach, **Michelle Tornga**, as part of her Master of Arts in Teaching at Hamline University in 2022. Tornga is an ESL Teacher at Blaine High School in Minnesota.



SWEL PD SPARKS: A GUIDE

<https://tinyurl.com/ec8pp3m7>

SWEL
Show-Off!

Adding to the
repertoire of
materials



Created by **Qurina Slayhi**, SWEL District ELL Coordinator for Anoka-Hennepin Public Schools, the largest school district in the state of Minnesota.



SCAN ME



SWEL
Show-Off!

Changing
policy



Where in the world are SWEL Coaches?



How to Participate in SWEL

Private Cohort (In-Person or Virtual)

Minimum of 10
participants

Global Cohort (Virtual)

Available 2x per year,
Summer &
Winter/Spring

Self-Study (Workshop 1)

Begin any time



The SWEL Workshops

Workshop 1: Contextual Language Workshop

Participants attend to EL linguistic justice by learning to prepare their colleagues to provide rich language instruction while honoring home language in the classroom

Workshop 2: Professional Development Workshop

This workshop examines what makes PD effective and trains participants to facilitate professional development for their peers

Workshop 3: SWEL Coaching and Administrators' Workshop

TESOL teachers learn non-evaluative peer coaching principles, set SMART goals, and plan to implement the SWEL Coaching Cycle while administrators develop an understanding of how SWEL fits into existing systems



The SWEL Workshop Series

Workshop 1: Contextual Language Workshop

Participants attend to EL linguistic justice by learning to prepare their colleagues to provide rich language instruction while honoring home language in the classroom

Workshop 2: Professional Development Workshop

Participants examine what makes professional development effective and engage in sample trainings designed to be replicable for colleagues in their settings.

Workshop 3: SWEL Coaching and Administrators' Workshop

Participants learn non-evaluative peer coaching principles and plan to implement SWEL coaching while administrators consider how SWEL fits into existing systems



SWEL Workshop Dates

Workshop 1: Contextual Language

4-5:30pm CST Tues/Thurs
April 11, 13, 18, 20, 25, & 27

Workshop 2: Professional Development

4-5:30pm CST Tues/Thurs
May 2, 4, 9, 11, 16, & 18

Workshop 3: SWEL Coaching

4-5:30pm CST Tues/Thurs
May 23, 25, 30
June 1, 6, 8





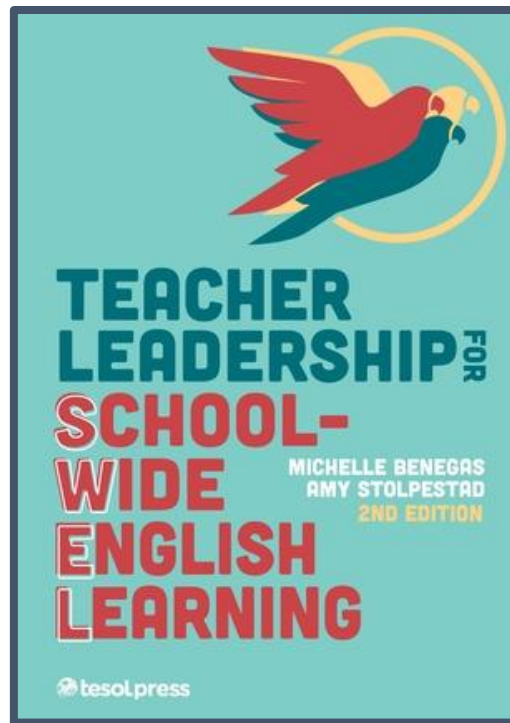
How to Learn More

Check us out online



<https://www.tesolswel.org/>

Email: SWEL@TESOL.org





Michelle Benegas, PhD
mbenegas01@hamline.edu