

**A Framework for Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction for English Learners**  
Instructional Practice and Materials Collaborations  
July 2021

A Vision for Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction for ELs

June 23, 2023

1

### About the Council

- Coalition of 78 of the nation's largest urban public-school systems
- Founded in 1956 and incorporated in 1961
- Supports urban education through:
  - Legislation
  - Research
  - Instruction and management technical assistance
  - Communications
- Member districts enroll over a quarter of the nation's English learners (ELs)

2

CGCS Survey 2019-20 Foundational Literacy Instruction & Materials for ELs

**27 Responses**

20	Districts
154	Reported Instances of Gen Ed. Materials
149	Reported Instances of EL Materials

3

### Materials Overview

**Grade Bands:**

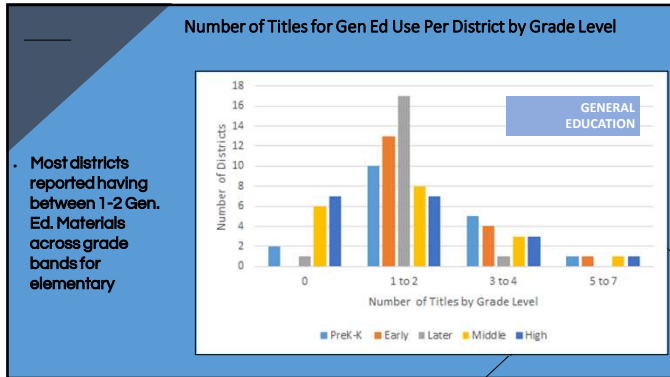
- PreK-K
- Early Elem. (Gr. 1 and 2)
- Late Elem. (Gr. 3-5)
- Middle (Gr. 6-8)
- High (Gr. 9-12)

**Most:** 24 distinct titles listed for PreK & K/Gen Ed and Early Elementary EL

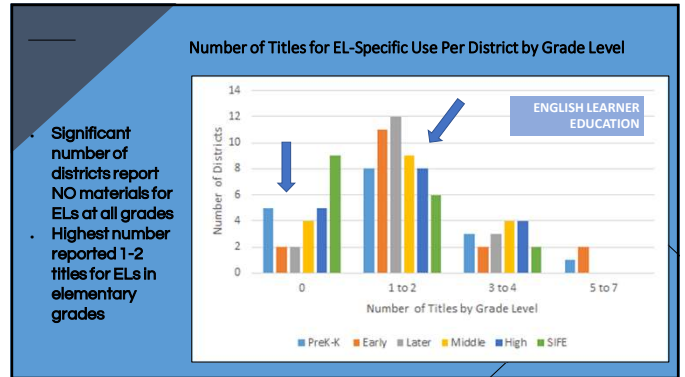
**Least:** 13 distinct titles for SIFE

Grade Band	Group	Number of Titles
PreK and Kindergarten	ELL	19
PreK and Kindergarten	GEN ED	24
Early Elementary	ELL	24
Early Elementary	GEN ED	23
Late Elementary	ELL	18
Late Elementary	GEN ED	22
Middle	ELL	21
Middle	GEN ED	21
High	ELL	18
High	GEN ED	17
SIFE		13

4



5



6

## Survey Takeaways

- Abundance of curricular materials being used across districts for Foundational Skills instruction for both Gen Ed students and ELs; few used across more than 2 districts
- Overall lower district responses for materials for Secondary Grades (6-12); few materials in common across districts
- Fewest districts reported materials for SIFE  
Publishers not likely to develop or improve materials for SIFE— too small of an already segmented market  
 We do not want SIFE to be learning in a separate universe, from entirely separate materials  
 Important to build capacity and tools to help educators meet SIFE needs with existing EL and gen ed materials

7

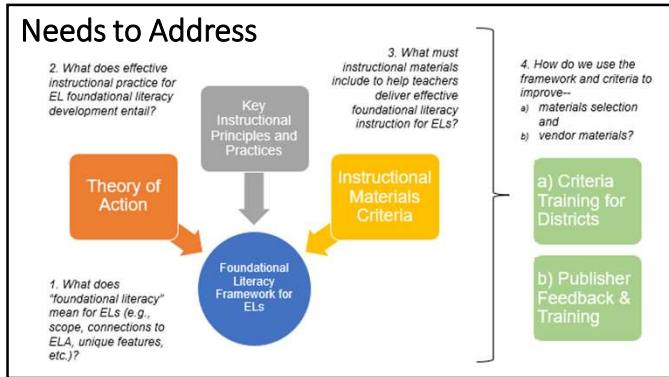
## The WHY: Reality Revealed by Survey

- Member-districts are using a wide range of instructional materials and approaches for foundational skills instruction for EL, usually with literacy materials and instructional strategies that have not been developed with ELs in mind.
- Current practice results in most English learners experiencing foundational skills instruction in English heavily focused on code-based skills, built on findings from research on how monolingual English-speakers learn to read English text.

**District Educator Needs**

- Teachers usually augment district-provided resources or supplement with other materials but do so without coherent guidance or support from research to address the multiple literacies that ELs bring to school.
- Educators require knowledge about: (1) second language acquisition pedagogy, (2) early literacy/reading development in English, (3) how the English language works, and (4) contrastive linguistics—to build on the home language assets their students bring to school and to ensure literacy instruction is effective for ELs.

8



9

### The HOW

#### Foundational Skills Instruction for English Learners

**WORKING GROUP**

- Clark County
- Dallas
- Los Angeles
- New York City
- Omaha
- San Antonio
- Tulsa

**TIMELINE**

- Summer 2021—Research Finding from Survey
- November: Draft to working group & experts
- BIRE May 2022: feedback from EL program directors and publishers
- April 2023: Finalized!

10

### Audience and Purpose

- Describes and makes a **case for a comprehensive and connected approach** to foundational literacy skills development for ELs as part of the core — or Tier I instruction
- Specifies the **features that instructional materials should include** to support the foundational literacy skills development of ELs in a systematic and meaningful way

Educators who are providing and/or are responsible for foundational literacy skills instruction to students whose home language is not English and who receive English language acquisition services in school (i.e., English learners)

Members of instructional materials selection committees and individuals who make decisions about materials used for foundational literacy skills instruction

Materials developers and publishers

11

### Foundational Skills Instruction for ELs

- Chapter I: Overview of Research
- Chapter II: Envisioning Foundational Skills Instruction for English Learners: A Comprehensive and Connected Approach
- Chapter III: What Teachers Need to Know about Language: A Linguistic Primer
- Chapter IV: Considerations for Selecting Instructional Materials to Teach Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction

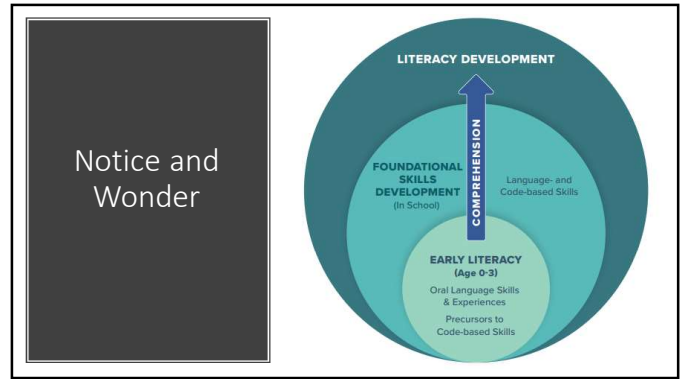
A Framework for Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction for English Learners

Instructional Practice and Materials Considerations

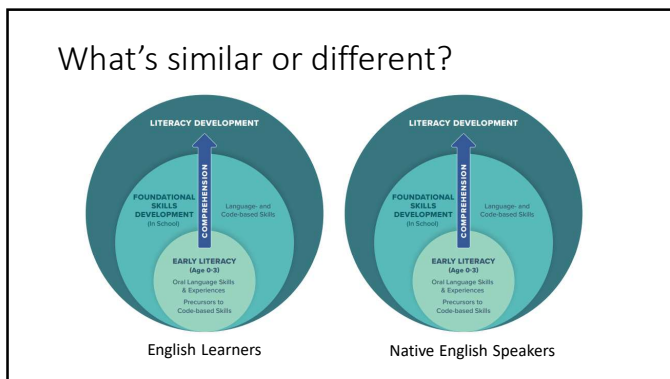
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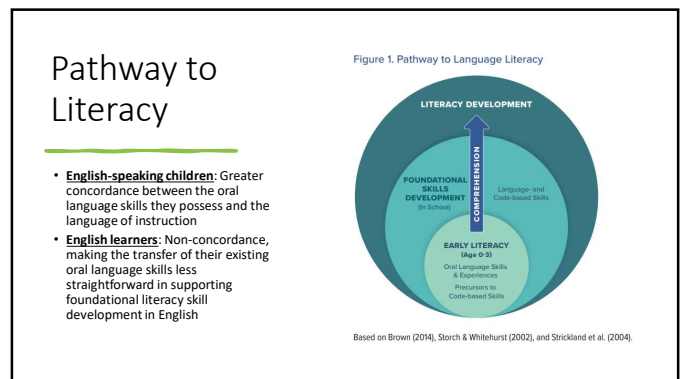
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14



15



16

## What is Different About a “Comprehensive and Connected” Approach for ELs?



	Traditional Approach	Comprehensive and Connected Approach
Home Language (Including Dialects of English)	Irrelevant or impediment	Critical asset
Grade-Level Content	Preceded by foundational skills	Anchor for foundational skills
Meaning-Making and Comprehension	Later stage of FS development	Prioritized throughout FS development
Linguistic Identity	Defined by academic English ability	Expanded by academic English ability
Language-Based Skills (Oral Language)	Subordinate to code-based skills	Developed simultaneously with code-based skills
Text Comprehension	Signaled by speed and accuracy	Signaled by proper expression

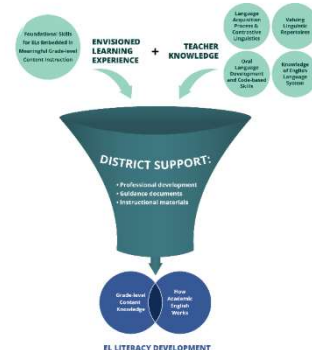
17

## Theory of Action

When teachers value and leverage the linguistic repertoires that ELs bring to school and teachers are equipped with knowledge about—

- How the English language system works,
- How ELs develop English as a new language, and
- Comprehensive approaches to literacy,

teachers can create learning experiences that build content knowledge and foundational skills instruction that supports student understanding for how academic English works.



18

## How the English Language Works


19

## Exploring the Research

What do ELs bring to learning foundational skills (i.e., assets)?	What supports do ELs need to learn foundational skills?
	What makes English challenging to learn for ELs?



20



What do these **SOUNDS** mean to you, if anything at all (in any language)?

- "coma"
- "don"
- "hoy"
- "san"

21



**Español vs Coreano**  
mismo sonido, distinto significado

@jondecorea

san montaña

22

English has many unique syllabic and word structures.

- ELs have an inventory of sounds in their home language.
- Some sounds are common, and some sounds are unique.
  - Consonant clusters (e.g., sixths, glimpsed, scream, etc.)
- When a sound does not exist in a home language, the EL might "hear" a similar but different sound.

**Shared sounds do not need to be retaught.**

Special Spanish Sounds	Shared Sounds	Special English sounds
ñ (niña)	b	voiced th (this)
hard r (fuerte, perro)	d	voiceless th (thin)
soft r (pera)	g	zh (measure)
	p	
	t	
	k	
	m	
	n	
	s	
	ch	
x sounds a	y	
bit like English h	l	
(México)	f	

Source: Kitchiner, J. (2017, April 05). Does the Spanish-Speaking Child in My Class Need Speech Therapy? CHCCS Speech-Language Pathologists. <https://chccs.org/wordpress.com/2017/04/05/does-the-spanish-speaking-child-in-my-class-need-speech-therapy/>

23

Transitioning to Reading



Spelled the same way as the other:  
O-U-G-H.

24

What's so complicated?

- Once upon a time, in the woods, lived a peasant. He was a good man with a noble heart. He spent his time in the forest cutting down **boughs** from the trees.
- Cutting wood all day made his hands strong and **rough**.
- One day, he cut wood so fast that by 3 o'clock in the afternoon, his day's work was **through**.
- It started to rain on the way home, and he got so wet that his nose became red, and he developed a hacking **cough**.

25

- In English, there are 26 letters that are combined to represent 44 sounds (phonemes).
- The five vowels are used to represent 20 unique sounds.
- These features of the English language contribute to **inconsistent sound-symbol correspondence** (e.g., Ziegler, Stone, & Jacobs, 1997).

Sound	Common spelling	Spelling alternatives				
/ɔ:/	oa boat	o-e bone	o open	oe toe	ow low	ough through
/u:/	oo moon	eau beau	oo brooch	ew sew		
/i:/	aw paw	ew screw	ue blue	u-e flute	oe shoe	ough through
/ɪ:/		ui fruit	o who	oeu manoeuvre	ou croup	
		a ball	or fork	oor door	ore more	oar board
		our four	ough taught	ar war	ough bought	au sauce
/ow/	ow cow	ou shout	ough bough			

Source: Bates, M. (ed.). The 44 Sounds (Phonemes) of English. The Reading Well: A Virtual Wall of Dyslexia Resources. <https://www.reading-well.org/sites/default/files/44-sounds-of-english.pdf>

26

Read...

**We heard John talking**

Think about...

- How many ways can the statement be read?
- How do the readings differ?
- Why does this matter?

27

Stress Patterns

Table 4. Influence of Stress Patterns on Meaning


Sentence with specific words stressed ('bold)	Implied meaning
We <b>heard</b> John talking	Plain statement of fact
We <b>heard</b> John talking	Implied contrast – "but we didn't see him"
We heard <b>John</b> talking	Implied contrast – "but didn't hear Mary"
We heard John <b>talking</b>	Implied contrast – "but others didn't"
We heard John <b>talking</b>	Implied contrast – "but we didn't hear him singing," for example

28

**What do students learn about language?** pp. 28-29


Thinking about your district's current foundational skills approach, reflect on...

- What are you currently addressing?
- What are you not addressing?



- Oral language and broad-based language skills
- Understanding of the English language and how it may differ from their home language
- Code-based skills to engage with texts in service of learning grade-level content successfully
- How academic English works to convey meaning


29



**How ELs Learn English: A Comprehensive and Connected Approach**

30

**Critical Components Emphasized** pp. 24-25



**Code-based Skills**

- Phonological and Phonemic Awareness
- Print Knowledge
- Decoding and Phonics
- Early Writing

**Language-based Skills**

- Oral Language
- Comprehension and Meaning-Making
- Word Knowledge

31

**Guiding Principles for the Foundational Skills Development of English Learners** pp. 29-36

- The linguistic repertoire of ELs and registers of English are valued and leveraged.
- Grade-level content serves as the anchor for foundational literacy skills development in service of mastering spoken and written academic language.
- Meaning-making and comprehension are prioritized.
- Mastery of academic English expands student linguistic identities.
- Language-based and code-based skills are developed simultaneously.
- Comprehension of text is signaled by students' ability to read with the proper expression to convey meaning, not solely speed and accuracy.

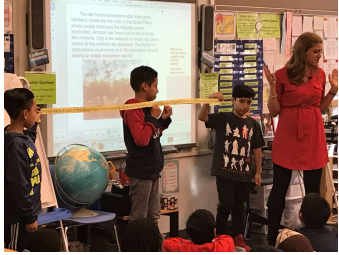
32



## Getting to Know the Guiding Principles

Be prepared to present on the following—

1. What is the principle?
2. Why does the principle matter?
3. What does the principle look like in the classroom?
4. Extra Credit: What support do teachers need to implement the instruction characterized by the principle?



33




## What do teachers need to know about language?

Topic	Already Know	Need to Know	How We'll Support Teachers	Needed Resources
Language Development				
Sentences and Discourse				
Stress Patterns				
Vocabulary: Principles of Word Formation				
Syllabic System				
Phonemes and Sounds				

34

### District-aligned Instructional Supports and Resources Explicitly Addressing EL Needs

Teacher-designed and -led instruction anchored in grade-level content that dynamically responds to the evolving learning needs of ELs requires the following targeted and multi-layered district resources and supports—

- 
**Professional learning.** Teachers need high-quality, relevant, and ongoing professional learning that continues to build their capacity around providing foundational skills instruction to students whose home language is not English, equipping them to respond to the educational needs of ELs (California State Board of Education, 2012). Professional development must also be aligned with (and/or complement) in a coherent way the district's overall professional development plan, particularly around foundational skills and literacy.
- 
**District guidance.** Any district guidance and resources provided to teachers for developing literacy and grade-level content knowledge should also be coherently articulated or aligned to meet the needs of ELs.
- 
**Instructional materials.** The central role that teachers play is supported by quality instructional materials that facilitate engaging learning experiences. These learning experiences build grade-level content knowledge and simultaneously develop oral language and foundational skills for ELs. District-adopted materials, approved lists of texts, or guidance for the adoption of instructional materials to support foundational skills instruction should explicitly include features that address the needs of English learners.

35



## A Framework for Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction for English Learners

Instructional Practice and Materials Considerations  
Spring 2023

# Supporting Families


36

**Home Language Erosion**

Oftentimes, English replaces the language of the home and family, even if parents do not understand or speak English well. This language replacement leads to a gradual erosion of communication between parents and children, and a lessening of the bonds between them, making it more difficult for parents to guide their children (Fillmore, 2000; Rumbaut & Massey, 2013).

Socio-political forces shape the language politics students must navigate as they acquire English and develop their identity. Children are highly susceptible to the English bias in school and the world. They know about insiders and outsiders and belonging or not. They can also detect bias against those who are unable to speak English easily or well (like their parents and family members).

The younger children are when they begin to learn English at school, the more easily they learn it, provided they have opportunities to interact with teachers and classmates in meaningful activities conducted in English. Regrettably, students exposed to other languages prior to formal schooling do not necessarily become bilingual by merely learning English in school. Attaining biliteracy requires the intentional, formal development of both languages. Unless home languages are supported in meaningful ways, including recognizing parents' home language proficiency as an asset, ELs are likely to put those languages aside—even in the home, as they learn English.




37

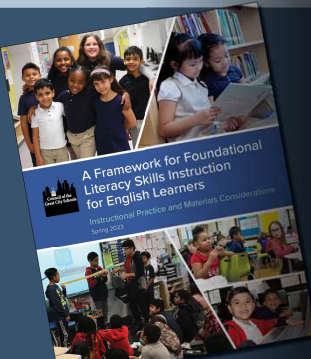
**Empowering Families to Support Home Language Development**

Skills in any language are beneficial to learning new languages, such as English, in school. Therefore, families should be encouraged and supported to engage with children using languages spoken in the home. Many families and educators mistakenly believe that home language reinforcement as students begin to learn English is counterproductive. Promoting home language development also helps to mitigate the home "language loss" and the associated loss of connection to the home and culture that often occurs as students learn English. This is especially important when schools only offer English language instruction. Materials that schools and educators can use to empower families to support home language development would—

- Explicitly convey to educators, families, and students the benefits of home language development alongside English development in school.
- Encourage students to communicate in their home language outside of school and deepen their knowledge of the characteristics of their home language through activities focused on meaning-making and communication.
- Convey, to the extent possible, to family members in their home language the similarities and differences between the language they know and English—and how they can use this knowledge to support their students in learning English while reinforcing the home language.
- Encourage families to find time to engage in activities of cultural importance, such as speaking, reading, oral storytelling, etc., in their home language—using increasingly complex and mature language (i.e., the language used by older members of the community) as students get older.
- Help families and educators to be aware of traumatic and emotional experiences that may arise as children attempt to fit into the school environment, straddling two cultures.




38



**Instructional Materials Criteria**

39

**Figure 3. Phases of the Instructional Materials Review Process**




**Phase 01: Overarching Considerations**

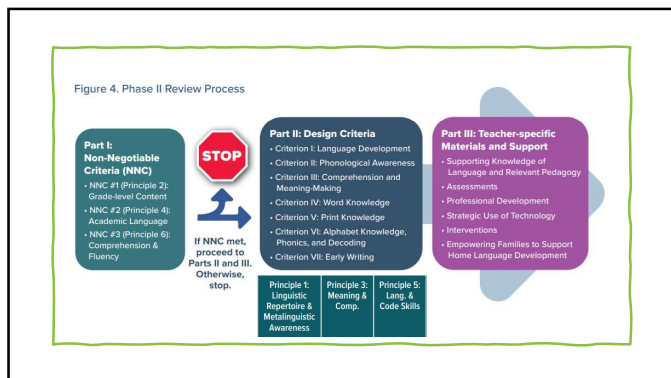
1. Define the district context.
2. Define the program features or approach for foundational literacy skills instruction (in general and specifically for ELs).
3. Define district needs.
4. Assess the underlying approach for EL instruction and the validity of proposed materials.
5. Determine alignment with the district's approach to ELA/ELD and foundational skills instruction for ELs and student needs.
6. Decide which materials advance to Phase II.

**Phase 02: Key Considerations for English Learners**

- Part I: Non-Negotiable Criteria (NNG)
- Part II: Design Criteria
- Part III: Teacher-specific Materials and Support



40



41

### Materials Review Activity

Considering materials that you currently use or are reviewing, use the criteria matrix to determine the criteria *met*, *partially met*, and *not met*.

For *partially met* and *not met*, note specific examples and what is needed to meet the criteria.

Criteria Met	Criteria Partially Met	Criteria Not Met

42

## Closing Thoughts

43

### What support do you need to shift to a *comprehensive and connected* approach?

	Traditional Approach	Comprehensive and Connected Approach
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44

## Observations from Lily Wong Fillmore

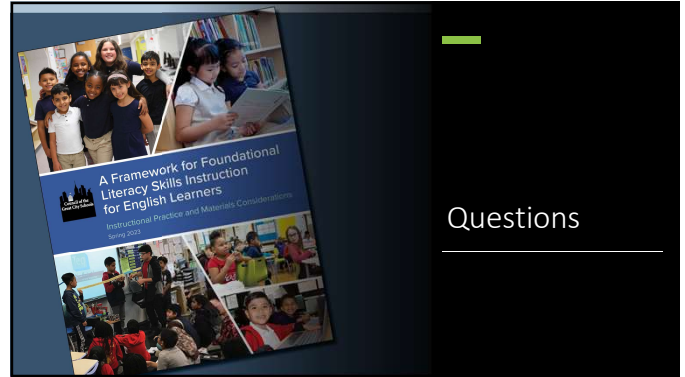
As I engaged the [English learners] in discussions of the materials they were working on, it became obvious that they were stymied by the language of the texts. It was not just the vocabulary, but the syntax itself was a stumbling block. ... I realized that written English was as foreign to them as German or Albanian would have been. Their spoken English was different enough from the written English they encountered in texts to prevent them from making much sense of it....

There are aspects of language that can only be learned through literacy since they do not appear in everyday oral language communication. ... There is only one way to learn this kind of language, however, and that is by working with texts that are written in such language. It is by working with complex texts that students can discover how such language works (Fillmore & Fillmore, 2012).

Wong Fillmore, L. (forthcoming). Language, Learning and Life. In J. Ávila (Ed.), Leaders in English language arts education: Intellectual self-portraits. Brill.



45




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 Questions
 

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46