



**To:** Somerville School Committee

**From:** Paulina Mitropoulos, MLE Director  
MLE District Leadership Team

**cc:** Dr. Ruben Carmona, Superintendent  
Jessica Boston Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Academics

**Date:** Monday, June 10, 2024

**Re:** MLE Department Update

Dear School Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share SY 23-24 highlights from the Multilingual Learner Education (MLE) Department. We hope this memo serves as a brief summary of the core goals and key focus areas that have framed our work this year. The MLE Department's central value is an asset-based approach in viewing the unique strengths and attributes of all multilingual learners, which account for 26% of all students in Somerville. In my second year as the MLE Director, my priority has been to collaborate with all stakeholders in order to ensure that our multilingual learners have equitable opportunities to access learning experiences and supports in every school across the district. I am incredibly proud of the wonderful work of our MLE team this year; in partnership with school and district leaders, we are working towards a shared accountability to promote equity and access to an excellent education for all multilingual learners in Somerville.

## **Our Vision**

Multilingual learners in Somerville attend schools in which all educators share responsibility for their success, engage effectively with their families, and value and nurture their linguistic and cultural assets.

Multilingual learners in Somerville are taught by effective, well-prepared, and culturally responsive educators who hold them to high standards and have the resources and professional learning they need to advance students' academic and linguistic development simultaneously.

Multilingual learners in Somerville have equitable access to meaningful and rigorous learning opportunities that build on their cultural and linguistic assets and the academic, linguistic, social, and emotional supports they need to excel.

Multilingual learners in Somerville thrive in high school and graduate with the knowledge, skills,

and abilities necessary to be successful in college and/or a career of their choice, and to contribute to civic life in a global community. (Adapted from [MA DESE Blueprint for English Learner Success](#))

## Our Mission and Goals

The MLE department oversees the implementation of equitable and effective programming and services for multilingual learners and their families from initial identification through reclassification. Our department's **three core goals** include:

- *Goal 1: Provide effective, research-based programming, curriculum, instruction, and assessment designed to build on students' assets*
- *Goal 2: Develop and support educators and leaders via professional learning, collaborative structures, and career pathways*
- *Goal 3: Partner with families throughout their students' educational experience*

## Key Focus Areas by Goal

***Goal 1: Provide effective, research-based programming, curriculum, instruction, and assessment designed to build on students' assets***

### *Programming*

- Supported multilingual learners' access to and inclusion in general education learning experiences through enhanced systems and staffing models
  - Implemented efficient criteria and processes for transitioning students from Newcomer programming to General Education classrooms
  - Increased ESL Specialist staffing to support inclusion via co-teaching model
  - Piloted more inclusion opportunities for students in Newcomer programming across the district
- Continued to refine district-wide programming for Students with Limited/ Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) in alignment with needs assessment conducted in Spring 2023
  - Implemented Year 2 of SLIFE programming and supports at Argenziano (grades 2-4), Healey (grades 2-4), and Winter Hill (grades 5-8)
  - Completed Year 2 of the updated Goal program model (SHS/SCALE) for older SLIFE, culminating in the **graduation of 3 students in June 2024**

- Collaborated with school and district leaders to plan for programmatic updates for school year 24-25 in line with updated DESE guidance as follows:
  - Integration of all multilingual learners in general education kindergarten classrooms district-wide
  - Increase in general education inclusion opportunities for multilingual learners in newcomer programs
  - Implementation of enhanced progress monitoring systems for Former English Learners (FELs)
  - Updated systems for identification and progress monitoring for multilingual learners in PreK and Kindergarten

## *Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*

- Curriculum
  - Implemented Year 3 of American Reading Company (ARC) Dual Language curriculum in grades K-5 in Unidos Program at ESCS
  - Collaborated with K-8 ELA, Math, and Social Studies coordinators to select and prepare roll out of new curricula with attention to the needs of multilingual learners
  - Completed the curriculum selection process to adopt new ESL curriculum materials for WHCIS Newcomer Academy
- Instruction
  - Designed and shared our [Equity in Action: A Guide to High-Quality Instruction for Multilingual Learners](#) with district and school leaders and planned for district-wide implementation in SY 24-25
  - Developed district guidance document on home language use in the classroom in keeping with current research and DESE guidance
  - Continued building capacity for co-teaching model in ELA classes to deliver ESL instruction at all K-8 schools through professional development and coaching
- Assessment
  - Administered standardized ACCESS 2024 testing to ~1,200 multilingual learners in grades K-12 in four language domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening)
  - Conducted initial English language assessment of 351 students with another language in the home as part of the new student enrollment process (316 identified as multilingual learners, 35 identified as fluent English speakers)
  - Implemented ongoing English language development progress monitoring assessments to all multilingual learners (~1,200 students) district-wide

## ***Goal 2: Develop and support educators and leaders via professional learning, collaborative structures, and career pathways***

### *Professional Learning and Collaborative Structures*

- Facilitated six MLE Department hours for over 100 educators in grades K-8 across the district, on the following topics: co-teaching in ELA/ ESL in general education and Unidos, supporting SLIFE, supporting long-term multilingual learners, and including newcomers in specialist courses
- Facilitated a year long professional learning series for elective and CTE teachers at Somerville High School aligned to SHS Instructional Leadership team key practices
- Facilitated weekly newcomer educator PLC at SHS to build common knowledge and alignment of instructional practices focused on developing academic speaking skills
- Facilitated monthly K-8 ESL Specialist meetings focused on integrated content and language instruction, co-teaching, inclusion, and equity
- Initiated Multilingual Adjustment Counselor PLC, a professional learning community of counselors serving multilingual newcomers across the district, in partnership with the [Trauma and Community Resilience Center at Boston Children's Hospital](#)
- Developed professional learning course for aligned to our [Equity in Action: A Guide to High-Quality Instruction for Multilingual Learners](#) tool
- Partnered with Waltham Public Schools to share instructional practices for middle school instruction with SLIFE newcomers and classroom vists
- Partnered with Harvard University on an action-research study: Languages for Relating Project (L4R): Deep learning through meaningful relationships guided by students' voices and teachers' expertise
- Collaboration with Special Education department to communicate shared vision of high expectations and high support for all learners, strengthen MTSS process for all multilingual learners, and create resources for multilingual learners for the revised IEP

### *Career Pathways*

- Supervised practicum experiences for 4 ESL Teacher Candidates across the district
- Taught four Lesley courses through the Somerville- Lesley Residency Program
- Received \$199, 300 in funding through the DESE 181 English Learner Education Support Grant to build our ESL/ Bilingual Educator pipeline and adopt new ESL curriculum
- Partnered with [UMASS Boston CREATE Project](#) to recruit 20 early childhood educators to pursue ESL license

### *Goal 3: Partner with families throughout their students' educational experience*

- Welcomed and supported families of 351 students with another language in the home through the new student enrollment process
- Rebuilt and recruited additional families to join our Multilingual Learner Parent Advisory Council (MLPAC)
- Maintained ongoing communication with families regarding transportation of students to support equitable access to MLE programming across the district
- Supported families in transitioning 77 of 196 multilingual learners out of SEI newcomer programming and into general education for SY 24-25
- Informed and celebrated with families of 136 multilingual learners that reached Former English Learner status and will be reclassified for SY 24-25

As we bring the 2023-2024 school year to a close, I am proud of the progress the MLE Department, in collaboration with educators and leadership stakeholders, has taken to ensure equity and access for multilingual learners in Somerville. Next year we look forward to continuing our work with the roll out of our [Equity in Action: A Guide to High-Quality Instruction for Multilingual Learners](#) tool that will guide our department's approach to supporting educators in alignment with district goals for equity and excellence. I would like to thank the School Committee for their ongoing support and advocacy for the needs of our multilingual learners in the Somerville Public Schools. I look forward to our continued collaboration in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Paulina Mitropoulos  
MLE Director