



**To:** Somerville School Committee

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

**cc:** Dr. Jeffrey Curley, Interim Superintendent  
Chad Mazza, Assistant Superintendent of Operations  
Dr. Susana Hernandez Morgan, Interim Chief of Staff and Strategy

**Date:** Monday, June 12, 2023

**Re:** MLE Department Update

Dear School Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share SY 22-23 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 24% of all students in Somerville. In my first 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 multilingual mindset and shared accountability to promote equity and access 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***

### *District-wide*

- Designed and shared our [Multilingual Learner Mindset](#) across the district and with state leaders in the DESE Urban Superintendents' Network
- Designed monthly [MLE Newsletters](#) showcasing student work and teacher activities aligned with guiding principles of language development
- Supported the programming of Out of School Time for multilingual learners: Language Builders Program at East, Soccer Without Borders at Winter Hill, Enroot at SHS
- Enhanced assessment and data tracking systems district-wide to monitor student progress in language development and support instructional and programmatic decision-making
- Developed and disseminated [Comprehensible Input For Multilingual Learners Scaffolding Tool](#) for all educators
- Revised and implemented the [MLE Reflection and Action Tool](#) with school-based instructional leaders district-wide
- Conducted standardized ACCESS testing to 1,124 English Learners K-12 in four language domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening)

## *Grades K-8*

- Collaborated with K-8 ELA, Math, and Social Studies coaches and coordinators to build educator capacity related to the integration of content and language learning
- Implemented Year 1 Students with Limited/ Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) programming and supports at Argenziano (grades 2-4), Healey (grades 2-4), and Winter Hill (grades 5-8)
- Implemented Year 2 of American Reading Company (ARC) Dual Language curriculum in grades 3-5 in Unidos Program at East
- Enhanced Spanish Math curriculum materials K-5 for Unidos Program at East
- Adopted co-teaching model in ELA classes to deliver ESL instruction at all K-8 schools
- Revised and implemented criteria and transition process to integrate students from newcomer to general education classrooms

## *Grades 9-12*

- Collaborated with SHS Department Chairs on curriculum amplification and instructional practices to support content and language learning across the content areas
- Expanded SLIFE programming at SHS, including embedded professional development for educators, redesigned course offerings for SLIFE Year 1 and 2 cohorts, and continued development of the GOAL program model for older SLIFE
- Continued partnership with Special Education Department regarding assessment and identification practices and individualized learning experiences for dual identified students through ongoing MLE/ SPED administrator meetings
- Improved scheduling and programmatic practices in order to increase multilingual learners' access to general education courses and learning experiences
- Developed and implemented Year 1 of Newcomer Seminar course for immigrant and refugee youth new to US Schools (10% of SHS student body)
- Developed and implemented Year 1 of Tiered model for Newcomer Social Emotional Mental Health Supports (SEMH) in coordination with Elm Community team
- Developed tiered model for reading intervention coordinated by ESL Literacy Specialist

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

### *Professional Learning*

- Facilitated ten MLE Department hours for nearly 200 educators across the district, including topics such as, co-teaching in ELA/ ESL and supporting newcomers in elective/specialist courses
- Offered five different WIDA- English Language Development professional learning modules to over 100 educators across the district
- Offered choice PD for specific programmatic groups: Co-teaching, Unidos ARC PLC, SEI 1 Oral Language, SHS ESL & SEI teachers
- Offered school/ department based PD by request: student discourse/ comprehensible input at Winter Hill and Argenziano

### *Collaborative Structures*

- Facilitated monthly K-8 ESL Specialist meetings focused on co-teaching
- Facilitated weekly NEST PLC at SHS to build common knowledge and alignment of instructional practices focused on supporting SLIFE
- Provided coaching and consultation with educators on delivering instruction while fostering language and literacy development and meeting students' needs
- Participated in the DESE SLIFE Community of Practice professional learning including meetings and site visits with districts state-wide
- Partnered with SLIFE consultants to conduct a Needs Assessment of SLIFE Programming at Winter Hill and SHS
- Collaborated with building principals to share accountability for accessible and equitable learning experiences and student supports

### *Career Pathways*

- Supervised practicum experiences for six ESL Teacher Candidates across the district
- Hosted the bilingual hub and bilingual certificate program with Lesley University
- Taught four Lesley courses through the Somerville- Lesley Residency Program

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

- Supported, assessed, and placed 370 students with another language in the home (334 identified as ML, 36 identified as fluent)

- Supported families in transitioning 75 of 232 multilingual learners out of SEI 1 program and into General education in May 2023 for SY 23-24
- Informed and celebrated with families of 98 multilingual learners that reached Former English Learner status in June 2023 and we will be reclassified for SY 23-24
- Rebuilt and recruited additional families to join our Multilingual Learner Parent Advisory Council (MLPAC)

## Additional Highlights

This year, I would like to highlight that members of our team also presented at a number of state conferences:

- DESE SLIFE Community of Practice, *Virtual Site Visit* (3/30/23)
- Massachusetts Partnerships for Youth, Inc., *Supporting Immigrants in the School and in the Community* (4/6/23)
- MATSOL- Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages
  - *Making it Meaningful: Amplified Text Design for Newcomers* (5/31/23)
  - *Re-imagining Wrap-Around Supports for Immigrant and Refugee Youth* (6/1/23)

As we close out this school year, I would like to take the opportunity to recognize Emily Blitz, SHS MLE Department Chair, for her 15 years of dedication and commitment in championing the needs of multilingual learners across Somerville. As the first person in this role, Emily's excellent leadership has significantly enhanced programming for multilingual learners at SHS and has opened doors for their future. The MLE Department will greatly miss Emily.

Looking ahead to next year, I would like to share that our MLE Curriculum and Instruction Specialist, Antonella D'Eramo, will partake in the national WIDA Fellow Cohort 23-24 and will bring back deep expertise to impact future curriculum planning in Somerville. I would also like to share that we will have two new MLE administrators that will be joining our team on July 1: Gladys Valle, MLE Assistant Director, and Stephanie Bielagus, MLE Department Chair at SHS.

Lastly, 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.

Sincerely,

Paulina Mitropoulos  
MLE Director