COLLABORATION:
Working Together to Serve Multilingual Learners

Collaboration is one of the four Big Ideas of the WIDA English Language Development Standards, 2020 Edition. These four Big Ideas anchor the standards and are interwoven throughout the document:

1. Equity for Multilingual Learners
2. Teach Language and Content Together
3. Functional Approach to Language
4. Collaboration Among Stakeholders

A new set of comprehensive resources will replace earlier standards-related publications from 2007 and 2012. Look for them soon at wida.wisc.edu/teach/standards/eld

Why Collaborate?

Today's schools are more diverse, culturally and linguistically, than ever before—and multilingualism is the new norm. In 21st century classrooms, English proficiency cannot be seen as a prerequisite to meaningful participation in the core curriculum; instead, language must be viewed as something that is developed in the process of learning, when students are supported and have access to the richest curriculum our schools have to offer. Therefore, all teachers need to share responsibility for both engaging all learners in the core curriculum and developing essential language skills. WIDA supports collaboration to serve multilingual learners by

1) *integrating language and content learning, and*
2) *building on what students and teachers can do.*

In an 8th grade English language arts class at Northwood Middle School, co-teachers Linda Kahn, Lisa Petitte, and Kristen Douglass engage in a highly integrated and collaborative approach to teaching. Through thoughtful planning and teamwork, this co-teaching triad is able to design direct instruction lessons that engage students and various learning structures. The teaching roles are shared throughout any given lesson, with Ms. Petitte leading an introduction and then all three teachers seamlessly working with smaller groups and reinforcing skills. As these teachers exchange eye contact, model conversations for students, and flexibly respond to student needs it resembles something like synchronized swimming: harmonious, fluid, and incredibly artistic.

(Lindsey Rose, ELD/Dual Language District Director, District 112, IL)

Co-teaching and content-based instruction have been emergent approaches for a decade, with teachers working together to serve cultural and linguistic diversity in student populations. Many programs have shifted away from the fragmentation and segregation of multilingual learners in a pull-out program, towards collaboration and integration of all students with in-class support. There is growing evidence that English language development specialists cannot work in isolation, and to provide the most comprehensive support for multilingual learners, teachers need to collaborate. The research is clear: professional collaboration is a powerful factor in both student performance and teacher learning.

In this WIDA Focus Bulletin, we introduce collaboration that serves multilingual learners as a teaching and learning cycle, including: co-planning, co-teaching, co-assessing and co-reflecting. We explore how WIDA resources can support educators working collaboratively in each phase of this cycle. In addition, we outline first steps for initiating collaborative practices, as well as next steps for deepening collaboration to serve both student learning and teacher learning.

Collaboration impacts...
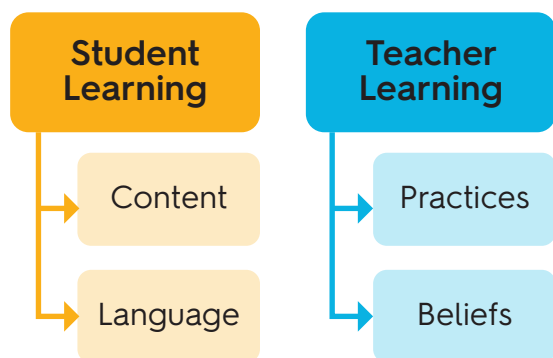
WIDA Focus Bulletins are resources for practitioners and educators who support, instruct, and assess multilingual learners in early care and education and K-12 settings. To see other Focus Bulletins, please visit wida.wisc.edu/resources.

Research on Collaboration

- Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017a) observed that, "although many policy makers think about effective teachers as individuals who have certain traits and training and who create special oases in their classrooms, the evidence is clear that the most effective settings for learning feature considerable joint work among teachers" (p. 111).
- Teacher collaboration has been linked to improved learning outcomes and engagement, particularly for multilingual students (Greenberg Motamedi et al., 2019; Theoharis & O'Toole 2011).
- One study found that peer learning among small groups of teachers was the most powerful predictor of improved student achievement over time (Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009).
- In a review of three dozen methodologically rigorous studies, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017b) found that "collective work in trusting environments provides a basis for inquiry and reflection into teachers' own practices, allowing teachers to take risks, solve problems, and attend to dilemmas in their practice" (p. 10).

WIDA FOCUS BULLETIN >> CLOSER LOOK

Shifting Paradigms: How Do We View Multilingual Learners?

Greater integration and collaboration challenges teachers to view multilingual learners along a developmental continuum of academic English. This evolution represents a shift away from a 20th century paradigm of viewing multilingual learners as a small, separate group of students who are the responsibility of ELD/EAL teachers. In other words, multilingual learners were considered a problem for the specialist teacher to "fix" so they could return to the mainstream to learn the core curriculum with other students. In the 21st century paradigm, all teachers share responsibility for all students. From this perspective, multilingual learners are viewed along a continuum on which all students are developing academic English proficiency.

FROM 20TH TO 21ST CENTURY TEACHING

20th Century Paradigm

21st Century Paradigm

adapted from Mulazzi & Nordmeyer, 2012
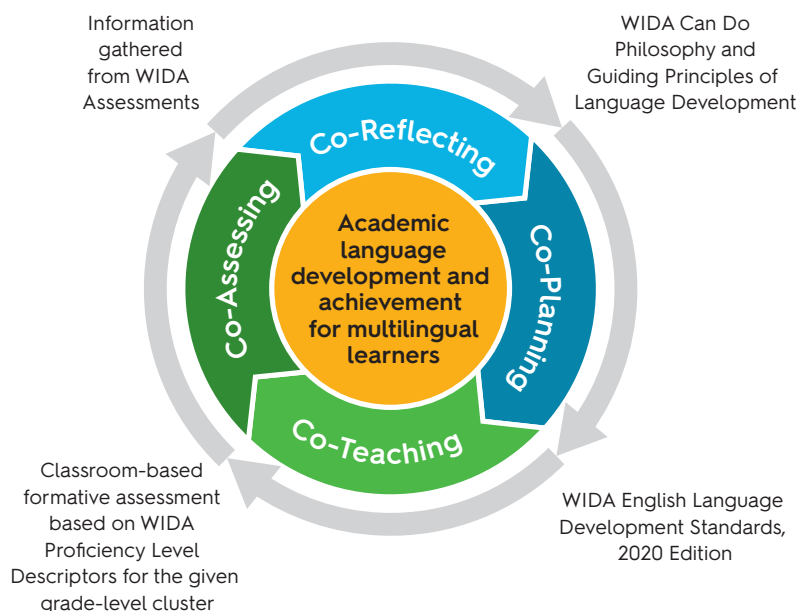
adapted from Mulazzi & Nordmeyer, 2012
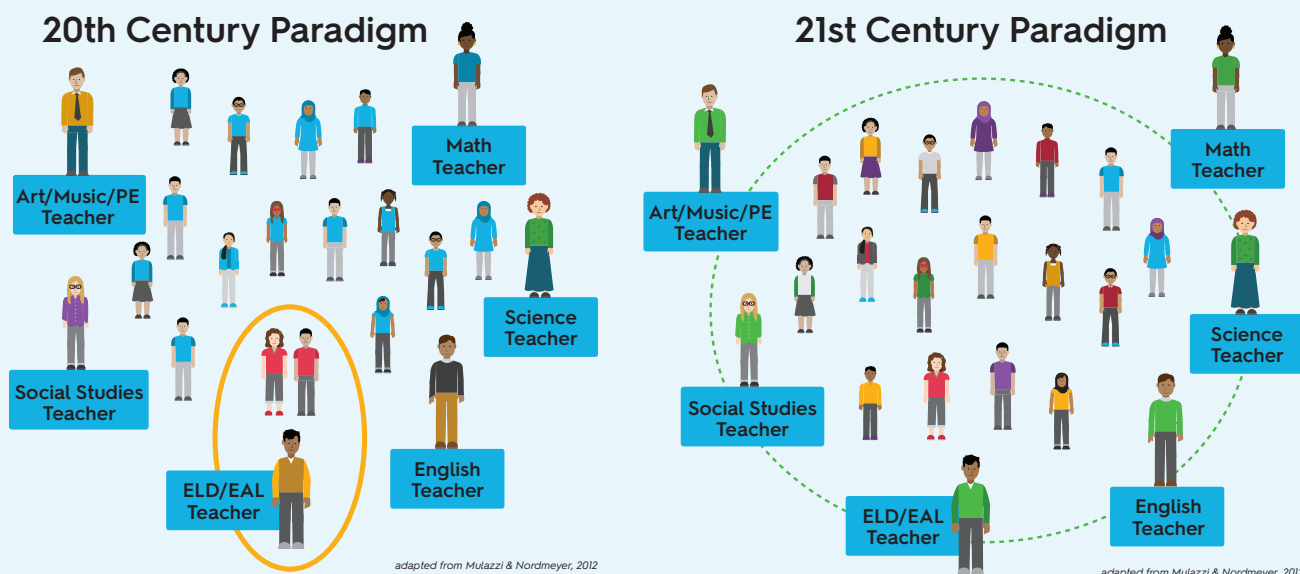
"We went from the curriculum driving our instruction to student data and inquiry driving our instruction, based on the framework of the WIDA standards and content area standards. We moved from the pull-out model to a co-teaching model last year. I saw significant growth with co-teaching compared to when we used to use the pull-out model when I compared the growth data from one of my grades,"

*(Caitlin Sirkel, EAL Teacher, Shanghai Community International School, China *)*

Defining Collaboration

The process of collaborating with a focus on multilingual learners is best regarded as a cyclical process. Classroom-based formative assessment that is aligned with WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors is at the core of this approach to integrating content and language learning.

Information gathered from WIDA Assessments

WIDA Can Do Philosophy and Guiding Principles of Language Development

Co-Reflecting

Co-Assessing

Co-Planning

Academic language development and achievement for multilingual learners

Co-Teaching

Classroom-based formative assessment based on WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors for the given grade-level cluster

WIDA English Language Development Standards, 2020 Edition

Using WIDA tools in the Collaboration Cycle

Building on the WIDA Can Do Philosophy, educators can build on both student assets and teacher assets throughout this cycle. Reflecting what multilingual students can do, and building on these strengths helps educators to plan, teach, and assess together. Likewise, recognizing that each teacher brings unique expertise and experience to the collaborative partnership allows us to build on the assets of our colleagues to improve teaching and learning. While this cycle has distinct phases, it is not always linear and, in reality, these activities overlap.

School leaders also play a key role in establishing and sustaining collaborative practices. It is important that all stakeholders have a shared understanding of why and how teachers can work together to serve multilingual learners, and to build the culture and structures to support collaboration.

Collaborative Planning

Collaborative planning is at the core of successful co-teaching. Creating mutually agreed upon structures and routines as well as shared vocabulary and conceptual understanding are necessary for both long-term planning (e.g., focusing on a unit of study) and short-term planning (e.g., addressing upcoming lessons or lesson sequences).

Planning structures, protocols, templates, and online tools can help overcome the most frequently cited challenge—lack of ample, job-embedded, common planning time made

available for teacher teams that can consist of general education teachers, ELD specialists, special education teachers, and teaching assistants. Collaborative planning time may also be used for curriculum planning (such as curriculum mapping and alignment) or for professional learning and capacity building around WIDA standards, tools, and assessments. We have found that co-teaching may not be implemented with efficacy without co-planning; however, when co-teaching is not a feasible option, co-planning may ensure that ELD specialists support standards-aligned curriculum while allowing general education teachers and instructional specialists to coordinate and refine their plans for instruction and assessment.

Collaborative Teaching

In order to optimally plan and deliver instruction for multilingual learners, educators should faithfully use the collaborative cycle, so that teachers with different areas of expertise can deliver a coherent and cohesive, well-supported educational experience for multilingual learners. The main goal of co-teaching is to ensure that language and literacy skills develop while students participate in an equitable learning environment with full access to grade-level opportunities. Co-teachers can assume multiple, dynamic roles to deliver instruction that addresses the needs of all students within the same classroom. Roles and responsibilities may vary depending on which co-teaching configurations or models are chosen, however, if co-teachers are not explicit and intentional then too often one teacher becomes the "language whisperer" or de-facto assistant. With sustained collaboration, ELD/EAL teachers expand their understanding of core content in different subject areas, whereas the classroom teachers develop insights into and respond to the language and literacy development needs of multilingual learners.

Two Perspectives: Co-planning with WIDA Tools

This year, our team changed how we scheduled our in-class support. In our new model, half of our classroom teachers collaborate for a full learning cycle, offering in-class support every day, with the other half in class for the following cycle. We also created and scheduled a co-planning block with each teacher before each cycle of co-teaching. This co-planning time is important because WIDA helped us realize that one of the most important aspects of the collaboration cycle is co-planning. During this planning time, we discuss scaffolding ideas for ELL students, as well as ensure that expressive language opportunities are being embraced. The WIDA Can Do Descriptors and Performance Definitions are useful tools during co-planning time. (Note that in the WIDA English Language Development Standards, 2020 Edition, the K-12 Performance Definitions have been replaced with grade-level cluster Performance Level Descriptors.)
–Kristi Leitch, Carol Morgan School, Dominican Republic*

WIDA supports our school's rich culture of collaboration, which also fuels our students' success. Grade-level homeroom and EAL teachers participate in collaborative unit planning every four days, facilitated by our Primary Years Program coordinator. Additionally, EAL teachers and homeroom teachers co-plan at the lesson level each week. Together, they plan for meaningful and authentic learning experiences that are differentiated for individual English language proficiency levels and student interest. For example, the EAL teachers plot ELLs' four MODEL domain scores on the WIDA Can Do Descriptors, and use it as a valuable co-planning tool.
–Kristie O'Brien, Shanghai Community International School*

* all WIDA International Focus School Profiles available https://wida.wisc.edu/memberships/isc/members

Collaborative Teaching Models

Honigsfeld and Dove (2019) have documented seven co-teaching models of instruction, and each of these models identifies the (a) grouping configuration as well as (b) the particular roles and responsibilities of each teacher.

In three models, the students remain as one large group, with specific roles for each teacher:
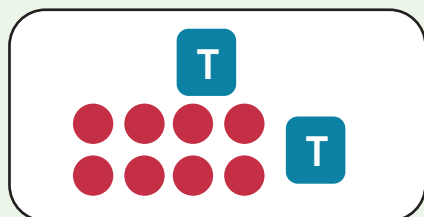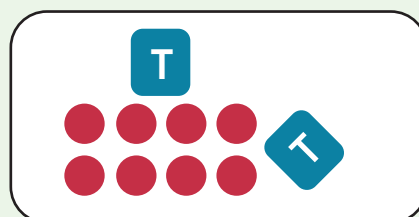
One Leads, One "Teaches on Purpose"
One teacher leads the lesson while the other supports one or more students with a clear goal based on identified student needs/strengths
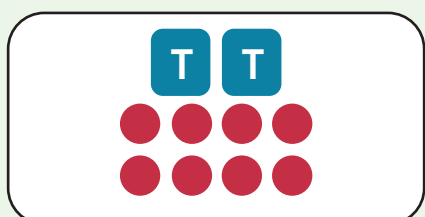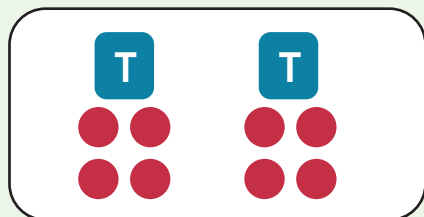
Two Teach Same Content
Both teachers lead the lesson to provide all students with opportunities to learn rich new content and practice or enhance skills
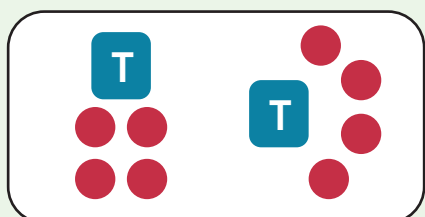
One Teaches, One Assesses
One teacher leads the lesson while the other collects targeted formative assessment data

**In another three models, the students are divided into two groups:**

Two Teach Same Content
Each group is led by a teacher working on the same learning targets but with different modes, languages or approaches

### One Pre-teaches, One Teaches Alternative Information
One group works on foundational skills or background building, whereas the other group works on enrichment or extension activities
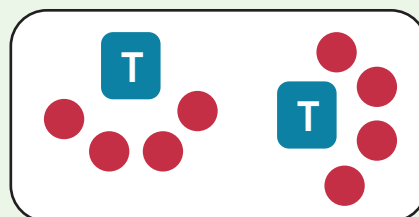
One Re-teaches, One Teaches Alternative Information
One group works on review and practice activities, whereas the other group works on enrichment or extension activities

In a final model, students are divided into as many smaller groups as needed, depending upon the lesson's purpose, and learning is facilitated by both teachers.
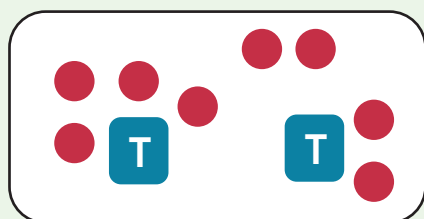
Two Monitor and Teach
An array of flexible groupings allows teachers to differentiate the content, process, and products with targeted grouping and intentional cooperative scaffolding. This model is particularly well-suited when additional support personnel are also part of the lesson.

Collaborative Assessing

All teachers need meaningful, accurate, and actionable information about their multilingual learners' language development and content achievement. Co-assessing helps teachers to "plan more effective lessons, differentiate instruction more purposefully, and integrate content learning with language development opportunities" (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2015, p. 70). Examining formative assessment data and planning a course of action is among the most significant interventions, according to John Hattie's research (2012).

To help teachers gain a more meaningful connection between their instructional practices and student learning, Dove and Honigsfeld (2018) suggest the use of well-established collaborative assessment protocols that build upon teachers' mutual respect for each other's expertise, while taking time to examine and discuss student goals, language, and literacy development, and overall academic progress.
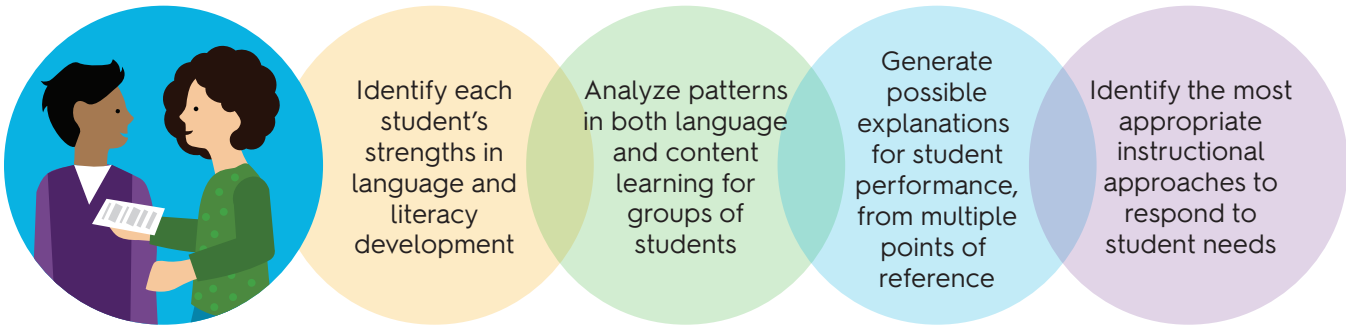
While engaging in co-assessing, teachers

- Identify each student's strengths in language and literacy development
- Analyze patterns in both language and content learning for groups of students
- Generate possible explanations for student performance, from multiple points of view
- Identify the most appropriate instructional approaches to respond to student needs

Collaborative assessment is highly structured and cyclical—each time new data are collected, students' progress and performance are reassessed; thus teachers have the opportunity to reflect on their students' academic learning, as well as socioemotional and linguistic development.

Teacher Voices: Cooperative Assessing

Every teacher is a language teacher and there is a shared responsibility for the success of all our students. This makes having shared expectations and common language important. For example, our work with the WIDA Writing Rubric at grade levels and within middle school teams has allowed teachers to engage in writing calibration sessions where subjective preferences can be set aside and shared understanding can be co-constructed. By collaboratively assessing and reflecting on student work, they are able to create student profiles with the benefit of multiple perspectives. *(NCIC Immersion School, China *)*

Identify each student's strengths in language and literacy development

Analyze patterns in both language and content learning for groups of students

Generate possible explanations for student performance, from multiple points of reference

Identify the most appropriate instructional approaches to respond to student needs

Collaborative Reflecting

For co-teachers to capitalize on each other's talent and amplify their impact on students, reflection and honest conversations about their professional relationship, instructional practice, and impact on student learning are essential. This is particularly important because "the long-standing culture of teacher isolation and individualism, together with teachers' preference to preserve their individual autonomy, may hinder deep-level collaboration to occur" (Vangrieken, Dochy, Raes, & Kyndt, 2015, p. 36). There is no single right way to co-reflect; the only wrong way is not to do it. We suggest the following questions to guide the shared reflection process based on Wiseman, Allen, and Foster (2013):

Do we nurture each other's talents and utilize them to benefit all our students?
- *Do we create an environment with a high level of instructional intensity, requiring our best thinking and work as well as those of our students?*
- *Do we actively seek opportunities that cause us to stretch beyond our comfort zones?*
- *Do we make sound decisions by welcoming differences of opinion and engaging in decision-making protocols?*
- *Do we give each other ownership for student progress and celebrate our success as co-teachers?*

Collaborative reflection can be structured into meetings or may even take place during the lesson utilizing "Teacher Time Outs" as described below.

Collaborative Reflection in Action

Mrs. Eisenberger, ELD co-teacher and Mr. Smith, 6th grade Teacher at Whittier Elementary School, have students who are working in partners to match fraction division equations with a model and contextual problem. As both teachers circulate the room and check in with each of the student teams, the teachers meet for a teacher time-out. Mr. Smith focuses the class and Mrs. Eisenberger states, "We will be taking a teacher time-out to discuss what we observed and will determine where we will go as a class; please continue working." During the time-out, both educators note the ease with which the students are matching fraction division equations, models, and contextual problems. Mr. Smith suggests a change to instruction. "Instead of continued matching with all three parts provided, we challenge the students by providing only one part of the process, suggesting the equation, and having students work together to generate the context and model in their partner groups." Mrs. Eisenberger agrees, and suggests providing a word bank of situations that the students could use in their context (cooking, racing, etc.). Mr. Smith focuses the class by saying, "Teacher time-out is finished. Here is what we would like to do. Mrs. Eisenberger and I will model for you." Teacher time-outs take no longer than two to four minutes; however, they allow for adjustment to instruction to happen immediately rather than waiting for the next lesson. This advances content with appropriate language scaffolds for students to meet the challenge as needed.
(Emilie Eisenberger, ELD Teacher, Whittier Elementary School, Boise Public Schools Idaho)

Collaboration as a Cycle

Collaborative Assessing

- Use the **WIDA Speaking and Writing Rubrics** to find student strengths in three dimensions
- Use **WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors** to create and assess language expectations
- Use data from **WIDA language assessments** to evaluate language growth
- Engage students, parents, and colleagues as partners in learning through self-assessments, surveys, and conferences

Collaborative Reflecting

- Build dynamic **Can Do Student Portraits** to:
  - describe each student's cultural, experiential, linguistic, and academic assets
  - describe students using asset-based language
- Use **WIDA Guiding Principles of Language Development** to inform professional development for teachers and parents
- Use data from **WIDA language assessments** to evaluate and facilitate language growth over time

WIDA Assessments
WIDA Rubrics
Proficiency Level Descriptors

WIDA Can Do Philosophy
and Guiding Principles of
Language Development

WIDA Focus Bulletins and
WIDA Professional Learning

WIDA English Language
Development Standards,
2020 Edition
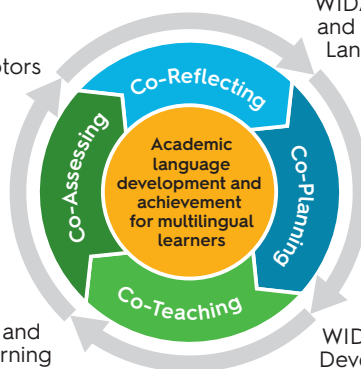
Collaborative Teaching

- Use intentional co-teaching structures to build on the strengths of both teachers
- Make connections to students' prior knowledge and build necessary background
- Use supports to scaffold instruction and assessments to engage all students
- Monitor understanding and make adjustments including use of multiple languages

Collaborative Planning

- Identify the most prominent **Key Language Uses** necessary to meet content objectives to help prioritize and organize a simultaneous focus on language and academic content
- Select relevant **Language Expectations** to develop unit level language goals
- Use **Annotated Language Samples** to inform language focus throughout units and lessons
- Use **WIDA Can Do Name Charts** to group students strategically

* WIDA tools are indicated in bold

Remote Collaboration:
Teaching and Learning from Home

Whether due to a natural disaster, civil unrest or a global pandemic, teaching and learning look very different when done remotely. And when there is disruption to in-person school, collaboration is no longer a luxury; instead, it is a lifeline that allows teachers to learn about new online tools, to integrate innovative teaching activities (both high-tech and low-tech), and to share responsibility for creating online or take-home resources.

Both educators and families can be challenged by remote classes, especially when coupled with uncertainty of when they will end. Teachers can work together to identify assets by asking "How can we make learning at home feel more real than virtual? What kinds of offline activities might support students?" Teachers can find opportunities that connect curriculum and concepts to students' lived experiences and immediate environment. For example, students might interview siblings for a project or parents can join the classroom morning meeting. Students can also use pets or nearby objects to make connections with their learning. Equity is also a critical consideration for online learning: not all students have the same access to technology, and consistent high-speed internet may not be available in all homes. How can teachers collaborate to ensure learning activities and materials meet the needs of all learners? To ensure they're accessible and mobile-friendly? For example, PDFs are generally more accessible for students with disabilities who may rely on screen-readers.

When transitioning to online classes, there is no need to start from scratch. Consider how to adapt existing collaboration protocols and practices to support language and content learning. Just as classroom routines support student learning, familiar collaboration protocols can support teachers in staying connected personally and in maintaining professional relationships.

Teaching Together while Apart:
Virtual Collaboration Cycle

Collaborative Planning: Digital practices are portable, so teachers can more readily share resources with colleagues within the same school—as well as across schools, countries, and even continents. It is easy to become overwhelmed by the abundance of resources, however. To avoid fragmentation or confusion, co-teachers can build a connected learning plan for a birds-eye view and road map of the curriculum, with clear goals and objectives driving student engagement.

Collaborative Teaching: Two or more teachers are able to jointly present a lesson or engage with smaller groups through synchronous learning. This lower student-to-teacher ratio helps us to monitor student engagement. Digital co-teaching models might include one teacher broadcasting live video while the other teacher monitors the chat box and answers questions. Asynchronous learning may also be well supported by two or more educators who divide up responsibilities for developing learning tasks and curating instructional materials.

Collaborative Assessing: Likewise, if one teacher is facilitating an online discussion, the other teacher might track student responses as formative assessment or prompt students who have not yet participated. In asynchronous lessons, teachers are able to divide and conquer to offer more timely feedback to students, while virtual office hours can be staggered in order to provide maximum flexibility for reaching all students.

Collaborative Reflecting: As we collaborate with colleagues, we can offer social-emotional support and lead honest conversations about what works and what doesn't in a new learning environment. For example, virtual visitation allows teachers to shadow each other from the student's perspective. Protocols such as peer coaching or appreciative inquiry provide a safe container in which to offer feedback as we co-reflect with colleagues and set new professional learning goals.

Conclusion

Professional collaboration provides opportunities to build on student assets and teacher assets. Multilingual learners thrive when we leverage the collective expertise of teachers to integrate language and content learning. And multiple perspectives help us to recognize each student's linguistic, experiential and cultural assets, while intentional co-planning, co-teaching, co-assessing and co-reflecting allows us to meaningfully engage all learners.

And finally, leadership matters. In order to help teachers maximize their work together at the classroom level, leaders need to build a shared culture at the school and district level, and create both curricular and administrative structures that facilitate collaboration. This also allows the entire school community to see collaboration as professional development: teachers working together to serve students builds collective efficacy and provides valuable, job-embedded opportunities for reciprocal learning.

Pathways to Implementation:
First Steps & Next Steps

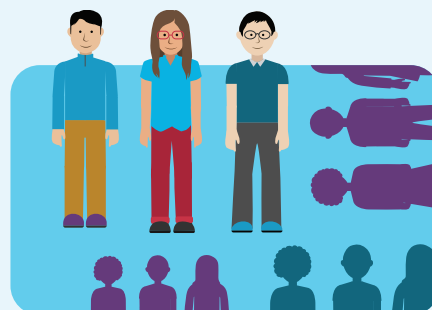## First Steps: Ready to initiate collaboration at your school?

Establish norms, expectations & agreements:
Use a menu or diagram to define common collaborative practices, then create norms for working together.

Create asset-based student portraits:
Recognize what your students can do by documenting interests and experiences, as well as languages and levels.

Use intentional grouping strategies:
Build on students' assets, including home languages, to plan for cotaught lessons.

Next Steps: Want to deepen your collaborative practices?

Evaluate student progress and teacher learning:
Analyze student data to set new teaching goals and establish shared professional learning targets.

Analyze impact data:
Gather feedback from students and colleagues on how collaboration is impacting teaching and learning.

Share what you've learned:
Co-facilitate an in-service session or conference workshop with your collaborative partner, or write an article together.

Follow us and stay informed on the best practices in language development.

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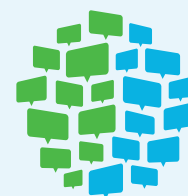
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