

Guideposts for Reading Instruction with Multilingual Learners

Welcome to WIDA webinars, this is a free virtual learning opportunity that offers educators insights and resources on a variety of topics relevant to educators of multilingual learners. In this webinar, you'll hear from expert staff and researchers. If you want to be notified about upcoming webinars, sign up for our newsletters at wida.wisc.edu/news.

Welcome! My name is Hetal. I'm a professional learning specialist at WIDA. It's so great to be here with all of you to talk about reading. Before we get started, I'd love to hear a little bit from you. If you're willing, would you type your name and where you're joining from today in the chat? And with so many of you today, it's going to be a little hard to keep up. Colorado, New Jersey, Illinois, Wisconsin, that's where I am today. Minnesota, that is where I am from.

Wonderful. Thank you all for joining from what looks like all over the United States. Amazing. We have some WIDA colleagues here today too. Thank you for being here. I would like to start off by giving you background on how we got here. Each year, our communications team does a lot to listen to educators, administrators and stakeholders to see what you all need from us.

And one of the things that kept coming up was we need support with reading instruction. We know there is a lot out there on reading, but what does effective reading instruction look like for multilingual learners? Two years ago, we started with a small team of researchers and professional learning specialists, and we spent several months reading research or talking to educators. What we learned is that many literacy programs and instructional approaches are not inclusive of multilingual learners.

And there is a growing body of research in the science of reading that is significantly shaping literacy instruction across the United States. Unfortunately, a lot of these programs are overlooking the linguistic and cultural resources that multilingual learners bring to the classroom. Programs also do not often account for the complexities faced by students who are simultaneously learning a new language and acquiring literacy skills.

What we've done to try to help shed a little light and make sense of the reading research and how it applies to multilingual learners is that researchers came up with the synthesis of what we learned and about teaching reading to multilingual learners. And our hope is that it addresses ways to expand what's currently happening. And there are five guideposts or big ideas that came out of the research, and it doesn't incorporate everything.

There is still so much research to be done in this area that these things will evolve over time. We're going to dive in. We are going to go through each of these guideposts and talk about what it means for the classroom. First guidepost is about building on assets because we know deficit-based assumptions and perspectives about what students know and can do or a lack of

Guideposts for Reading Instruction with Multilingual Learners

awareness or understanding about student assets can really limit our ability to draw attention to and leverage, knowledge and experience as resources for learning.

First, multilingual learners come to our classrooms with a wealth of background knowledge. Often when students aren't yet able to communicate this background knowledge in English, or if background knowledge is different from their classmates. It's taken as a lack of background knowledge.

I have a personal example for that one. I grew up in small town rural Minnesota where my family was the only Asian immigrant family. My classmates all lived in houses or apartments, and they played in their neighborhoods. They went to music and sports lessons. They went to church, and my family lived in the manager's apartment of a little motel.

I grew up helping with the business. We prayed in Sanskrit at an altar at home. I had rich background experiences that many of my peers didn't have, like helping my mom interpret when we're out doing errands. I had background knowledge too, but it was different from my peers. Multilingual learners come to our classrooms with background knowledge just as much as anyone else.

It is just different and they need help from you to draw it out and to connect it to the classroom because it is not often validated in our schools. There is a book. It is an upper elementary age book and for some of you have heard of it, called *Front Desk* by Kelly Yang. It tells this story. It's a beautiful story of this young girl whose immigrant family runs a motel. And it was published in the last few years. It's a thirty-year-old woman.

I was so touched and moved to tears because it was the first time I had read a book about growing up that really portrayed the way I grew up. And texts like that are so important because research shows that a reader's knowledge of an experience with content or the topic of reading plays a critical role in reading comprehension.

We need to really take a careful look and think about whose background knowledge is being privileged in the classroom and what can we do to make sure that all children in our room have a chance to see their background knowledge represented in text. Another thing we can do to build on assets is to build on home literacies. Home literacy or community literacy practice is our everyday literacy practice.

They are often found in the home or the community, and they are things like helping a sibling with homework, translating for a family member at the grocery store. It is complex tasks and powerful experiences that contribute to academic development and content areas. All these activities that students do at home, these literacy activities, require the same type of thinking

Guideposts for Reading Instruction with Multilingual Learners

and skills that are required at school, like problem solving and critical thinking and applying language in different ways.

By valuing and integrating these practices as academic resources, we can create more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments for multilingual learners. It allows multilingual learners to become more confident readers that are able to draw on their full range of experience and knowledge. I'd like to give you a personal example. I will give you background information. My family immigrated from India just before I was in kindergarten.

I was about four and every evening growing up, my grandmother and my mom, we would sit cross legged in front of our family altar. We would sing prayers and Sanskrit, and these prayers were written down in books, but also memorized. A lot of us memorized them as children, and they are a precious part of my home literacy experience.

After these prayers, my grandmother would read from her prayer book and tell me stories, religious stories, and we would have discussions, what I learned, what the morals had to do with my daily life, with what they had to do with problems I had at school. And although these conversations happen in Gujarati, the critical thinking skills, the reasoning skills, the ability to understand themes from a text.

It all began here in my home. Yet not a single teacher or even my friends at school really knew about this experience of mine, likely because it was so different. It was unfathomable to anybody around me. In the same way, multilingual learners bring with them a diversity of experiences that we may not have even imagined that they have.

One thing we can do is we can try to learn through relationship building, through safe opportunities to share about what are these literacy experiences students are having at home. I would like to share two tools with you now, that can support you as you either embark on this journey or as you get deeper in this journey. The first tool is an empathy interview.

Empathy interview is a structured protocol that gives you a chance to deeply listen to perspective on reading or maybe home and community literacies, things you wouldn't otherwise know. Another resource we're sharing with you today is a community literacy mapping activity. Molly, our wonderful moderator, has just dropped these links in the chat for you. This is an activity you can do with a group of students or individual students as well. It's perfect for any type of teaching context.

It supports a conversation with students to see the literacy in their daily lives. It allows students to see their own literacy and enables you to learn about student experiences with it. I recommend looking at it to think about how you might start with yourself as a teacher

Guideposts for Reading Instruction with Multilingual Learners

modeling your own daily literacies. Because sharing family literacy practices is vulnerable. A student doesn't know how others are going to perceive customs and culture. It's important for us as teachers to model our own examples first.

I'm going to give you just a minute to browse those resources that Molly has put in the chat. I would like you to share in the chat how you might use one of them in your context. I'm going to share an example with you. Go ahead and look at those tools that Molly has placed the link into the chat and there's a little request to get the links. Go ahead and look at those links to share how you could use one of them in your context or how you already use them.

Thank you, Molly, for sharing those links again. And just to clarify, the empathy interview is on pages 12 and 13 of that. But scroll down a little bit to see that. Thank you for all your wonderful ideas. I see all kinds of ideas. Asking elementary students to map communities. Great starter activity for any age.

I love the idea of using that as a professional development activity. That's great because we do have to start with us before we can ask teachers to do anything or before we can ask students to do anything like that. I'd like to share my own example here because the handout is more geared towards younger learners, but I want to show you an example of how this would work well with older students too.

I mostly taught middle school for my teaching career, and this is an example of my literacy math. My middle schoolers love to take photos and share them with each other, so I thought that would make this activity a lot more engaging for them. And this is what I shared. I shared a picture of my mom at the temple where she sings prayers during holidays and festivals. I included a little information about reading and writing, but that is up to you how much you want to prompt students to include that type of information.

I included that prayers are written in books but that most people just remember the words. I also took pictures of the Indian and Pakistani grocery store, and it has signs and labels in Hindi and Urdu and in Gujarati as well. And the manager speaks in Hindi to us. I took some photos to show students like these everyday experiences that you have. And see signs you speak in different languages. They're a big part of your literacy. That's my example for you to see next. After you learn about these things. If you've learned now that you have a student in your class who helps her brother with her homework.

But how do you connect knowing that home literacy experience the student is having to the content that you're required to teach? Carmen Cellini is a teacher in Minnesota who does just that. She knows student background, she knows their literacy experiences and she look for ways to make connections even when she's teaching a topic like the lunar landing. Let's take this 3-minute video Molly has just put the link into the chat.

Guideposts for Reading Instruction with Multilingual Learners

Molly will just put the link in the chat in just a moment and go ahead and click on that link to watch the video. It's a video of Carmen teaching her third graders to pay attention to how she engages their home literacies or content. I'll be quiet so you have a chance to watch this video. I love this video. I was in the classroom when this video was recorded.

I think one thing that really struck me is that Carmen already really knew her students. She already had to know that they had these responsibilities at home for her to be able to tie the idea of responsibility to unity to the lunar landing. It is so valuable in terms of engagement. After, students went into mainstream classroom and we are able to really engage and we're so interested in the lunar landing.

I'd like to give you a moment now to share a reflection. You can either share if anything stands out to you from Cummins example or maybe how you are currently connecting multilingual learners home and community literacy practices to their academic literacy practices in your classroom. I'll give you a few moments to share any reflections you've had for this section.

I thank you all for sharing. I love her connection was so creative. Absolutely, as teacher's that's part of the skillset. Creativity for making all these things that we've been given and told to do and making it work for the students. It requires so much creativity. Thank you all for sharing. There's so many of you sharing that it's hard to keep up. I hope you all get a chance to read through all of your ideas because it's a great place to learn from one another.

The second guidepost is about fostering oral language comprehension because according to research, spoken language is the basis for written language for hearing students. In learning to read, students learn how sounds or oral language are mapped to print. Children learn key skills like phonological awareness through meaningful experiences with language, interacting with others, playing rhyming games, songs, talking to each other.

And that's how children learn words are made-up of individual sounds and can eventually be mapped to letters and decoded, remember that oral language doesn't just mean oral language in English. Students come to our classes with oral language, in multiple languages, and they may already have developed understandings of how sounds are mapped to print in another language.

Research suggests that this phonological awareness and working memory that students have already developed transfers to other languages. I can give you an example to help make this concrete. For example, if I say the word cat to you in English and ask you what sound that word starts with.

Guideposts for Reading Instruction with Multilingual Learners

All of you can answer. But even if I said the word for cat in Gujarati, you can probably still tell me what sound the word starts with. And the fact that you can is because of your phonological awareness skills. If I said a different word, you might struggle because the word starts with a sound that isn't in English. There is some crossover, but it's not always one hundred percent.

It is important to engage students in oral language activities. Practices like translanguaging using home language support students to use and develop all their oral language skills. I spoke no English and of course I do not remember this myself, but my mom told me that my kindergarten teacher said to her I would speak in Gujarati during lessons throughout the day, and my teacher pretended to understand.

Looking back, I feel so thankful to this teacher because she recognized that it was important for me to be able to speak my mind, even if she could not understand. As a result, she fostered my oral language development in Gujarati and eventually in English, all the while keeping my confidence safe. It is so important. The other important thing with oral language development is discussions about text, and especially extended discussions.

Beyond a question answer, a deeper discussion extended for a while. Talking about text strengthens the oral language to literacy connection. The third guidepost is about word knowledge. I want to review a quote because it's so powerful and connects to the previous ideas. Because deficit discourses and perspectives about buying multilingual students often suggest that they lack words, it's important to counter these perspectives and to emphasize that lexical knowledge or knowledge of words is an area where many of these students excel.

In fact, some of these students know words in multiple languages. It's such an important mindset to have when we think about expanding student word knowledge, which is very important guide quotes because knowing words is of course critical to comprehension and research even suggests that readers need to know a vast majority of words in a text to be able to effectively independently comprehend it.

Because of that, it's important to make sure that multilingual readers have opportunities to develop and expand their vocabularies as they engage with rigorous texts, all the while knowing that they're coming to our classroom knowing words, and as they learn new words, they're building connections to the words they already know, expanding their vocabulary rather than starting from nowhere.

Building and expanding around what students already know is important to do when we work on vocabulary with our students. Which can include strategies like drawing attention to copies between home language and English. If you teach a lot of Spanish speakers, there are

Guideposts for Reading Instruction with Multilingual Learners

many cognates between Spanish and English. Like the word for building in Spanish is edificio, which is so similar to the word edifice in English.

We also know that meaningful vocabulary learning happens when students are engaged in learning and can use words in a situation where it makes sense to use them. And it can mean activities like debating ideas in a novel or working together to solve a problem or build a model. In content, specific engagements and activities that are less impactful are ones where we are teaching words completely disconnected from context, like filling in the blank exercises or just a list of words and definitions.

And we know that words are so much more than definitions or even a translation because words have so many facets. They have different forms, different meanings, synonyms, antonyms. And knowing a word includes knowing when to use the word. For example, in English, especially where I grew up in Minnesota, we say thank you all the time for anything, even really little things. Even if somebody did not really do anything, we say thank you.

However, in Gujarati, the word thank you is not used often, and it's saved for formal situations or times when you're deeply grateful. It would sound strange or maybe even sarcastic if you said to a friend who just brought you a cup of coffee. And words are so much more even than direct translations. In Mandarin, for example, the direct translation of a specific word.

However, we can use the word for so many more things than we can use the English word. If really simple words like thank you and look can have different usages across languages, we can see how things like translation and definitions are of course useful, but they don't always paint the full picture of how to use the word. We need that from meaningful experiences with the word.

Here's an example. It is just a photo of a lesson taught by Michelle. She's a second-grade teacher in Utah. And the way she teaches is she pulls sentences from a text that contain words that she feels students might be a little unfamiliar with. And in this lesson, she was working on the word civilization, which is a complex word with quite a bit of meaning attached to it.

In this lesson, she connected the root word civil with a word the students already knew, civic, and produced the definition together. And she asked the students what other words are close to this word in English or other languages you know? Her class is mostly multilingual, but has monolingual students in her class too. She asked what words do you know in English that can mean this or other languages? And she went on to create a hand gesture together with her class co-created it to represent the words meaning civilization.

Guideposts for Reading Instruction with Multilingual Learners

And in this quick vocab lesson in the middle of reading, she engaged students home languages, their linguistic awareness and even their senses to make connections to the word. I just wanted to share that quick little example with you there and across subject areas. The fourth guidepost is about reading across subject areas and developing reading comprehension skills in different contexts.

Students in a school might start their day reading like a historian, focusing on different perspectives in a text and learning to understand multiple perspectives of a historical event. The bell rings to go to a different class, and now they're reading like a scientist to understand how a phenomenon works. And research suggests that when students are taught to read with purpose as a historian, as a scientist, for example, they're better able to think, comprehend and be critical with the text.

The guidepost is based on the idea that reading doesn't just happen in our literacy block lessons or in English class, but it happens across subject areas. We also know from research that skilled readers use combinations of strategies based on their needs flexibly. Strategies or things that you'll have probably heard of, making predictions, monitoring comprehension, setting a purpose for reading, making emphasis, and so on. Research shows instruction and reading strategy instruction is effective. It is very effective when we can teach students how to do it on their own and to know when it's appropriate to use a strategy.

Conversations about comprehension of a text are part of strategy practice. As an example, what did you read about? How did you know that is what you read about? How did you understand that? What did you do when you did not understand? What strategies did you use? Did you go back and reread? Did you talk to a friend? Those kinds of conversations really support comprehension, especially in subject areas.

A lot of you may already be familiar with the English Language Development Standard, I would like to make a little connection for you. We will not go deep into it because awareness of discourse structure or how a text is organized and how a text, how different texts are different in different content areas are really it's important for students to know when read a text, how it's organized, what to expect.

And students may need explicit instruction and interpreting different texts to understand how the organization of ideas and language patterns appear in various places in an argumentative text and social studies versus narrative and language arts and the ELD standards framework can support you as you do this work. The key language uses what you see here on the slide, narrate and form, explain and argue are the organizing features of the standards.

Guideposts for Reading Instruction with Multilingual Learners

How you would use it, just a very brief overview is if you have a text, for example, let's say you are a social studies teacher, you want your students to read or an elementary teacher working in social studies, working with a biography, you would think about what one of these does that fit into. Biography, it tells the story of a person's life.

I would say it's probably going to fit into narrate. And then you go to that area, look for social studies and then your grade level. Once you're there, you can see a list of language features that will support you as you teach. What language will students maybe encounter when they're reading in this particular text type? If you'd like to know more, I know that was a very quick overview.

We just designed a self-paced course, self-paced workshop called reading comprehension across content areas with multilingual learners. And if you have a secure portal, if you are part of the consortium, it is likely that you have free access to this course. But get in touch with whoever in your district or school signs you up for secure portal accounts.

If you're already an access test administrator, you have a secure portal and you have access to all these all these self-paced courses. I recommend you check that out and the link will be available for you at the end. I'd also like to share one other tool we designed for this reading comprehension self-paced course I just mentioned. Because the process of comprehension is often really difficult to see in whole group settings.

If you have a large class, it's hard to notice, especially for multilingual readers reading in English. But this tool helps support multilingual learner growth as readers and kind of connects the language and literacy skills they bring to the classroom with what's what the goals are, what's supposed to be happening in class. It is a three-part tool called Conferring with Multilingual Learners. And the first part of this tool is creating a reader portrait. It's a guide to help you create a portrait of a reader and it has questions and prompts like what is their English language development data in all domains. But there are WIDA access scores.

What do you know about the student's home language and do you know anything about their home literacy? It's a chance for you to also reflect on a student's reading and what you want to learn more about. The second part of this tool is an observation tool. For this part, you would plan to observe a multilingual reader maybe in two activities involving reading comprehension in any content area.

And you would try to observe the student during activities that are structured in different ways. And you see different things like a teacher LED lesson, a small group lesson, or independent activities.

Guideposts for Reading Instruction with Multilingual Learners

And it also works for you while you're teaching. We had a few teachers try this tool out and they said if we watch it, if we're doing it while we're teaching, they will just take a few moments after the lesson to kind of take some notes. It's not a very cumbersome tool.

It just helps you notice what's going on with a particular student. It's a reading conference tool. It helps you to plan one-on-one reading conferences, questions to ask, text to read together, what to focus on with the multilingual lens. I just shared very fast, shared three different tools with you. I'd like to give you a moment. Reminder to review them all or choose one and share in the chat how you might use one of them in your context.

I'll give you a couple minutes to look over these tools. Thank you all for sharing all your ideas of when reading as they come in. I love so many of these ideas that you all must use these tools, and they say some of you are already using them and I love this comment. The observation tool allows teachers to see the strong points rather than just being stuck and that they do not speak English mode.

I love that because that was really the hope with this tool is it shows you what the student can do when it comes to reading. It shows you a place to start. Thank you so much for sharing my observation. I see a lot of comments about the reader portrait as well. It can help you dig deeper into a student. I think it would be great to do with the team as well. If you work together with a teacher or share some students with a different teacher to do it together, that would be a great way to use that tool.

And these tools are brand new, so we just released them about two weeks ago. If any of you use them in your classroom and you would like to share them with the world, please send them over to us so you can just keep that in mind. Our next and last guidepost is about fostering equitable literacy learning because reading is more than just technical skill reading.

We read to expand our worldview. We read to act on the world. That's prayers perspective on reading and I love that. And it expands our understanding of who we are and our relationship with the world. And while negative representations can have harmful impacts, positive authentic representations are a really powerful way to move towards equitable asset-based classrooms.

And that means incorporating a diverse range of reading materials that represent different perspectives, cultures, language practices, things that resonate with student lives. These can foster effective learning requirements like I said and guideposts one because background knowledge is strongly tied to comprehension, experiences with reading also support students in working through a complexity. When teachers guide students through complex texts, fosters equitable literacy learning.

Guideposts for Reading Instruction with Multilingual Learners

We know all students need foundational reading skills, for academic growth. However, roles in literacy, like being able to critically think about a text, being able to use the text, should not be precluded when a student does not have foundational literacy skills or are still developing foundational literacy skills.

It's important we know that students can analyze when they're still developing foundational literacy skills so they can still work through complex texts. With your guidance, and that's important when we think about making sure that all our multilingual learners have access to grade level content and grade level rigorous learning. Finally, just another note, to view home language as a resource for learning.

Our students come to school with background knowledge, language, and literacy in their communities. How are we viewing those as resources for learning? And to give you a little bit of a story on that one, we have Emily. Emily is a high school ESL teacher in North Carolina. And in her teaching, she draws on her own experiences as a newcomer student in her connections with her students.

We're going to watch another video so you can check out her insights on equitable learning. And you have the link coming to you soon from one of our wonderful moderators. And the link is actually there. You just have to scroll up just a bit. It says focus bulletin Emily's tips on Vimeo. Thank you for reading Emily's note. Go ahead and share in the chat anything that stood out to you from her message.

I see somebody said 100% agree with her. I would like to hear what the rest of you think about Emily's message to you all. Yeah, Thank you. Students come with knowledge. They come knowing things. Thank you for sharing all your ideas in the chat. I love the idea of thinking of what it looks like for a student to present in their home language. And I know it's different in high school, but like I shared in my kindergarten experience, my teacher, she listened to me speak in Gujarati.

She definitely couldn't understand. Nobody could understand. If a student is sharing in their home language, then how can we incorporate it? What can we do to help the students know that we know they know things and they can share them in this space? I'd like to give a little recap here. There are many resources, and there have been many questions in the chat about where we can get them. All resources shared during this webinar are on the website.

There is one article at the very end. I shared a lot of my personal story with you all today. I also wrote an article that includes more details about my story with literacy. I included that as well in case you want to read and learn more about me and my literacy journey.

Guideposts for Reading Instruction with Multilingual Learners

Otherwise, everything else is on the website which is again newly launched. Each of the guideposts has a snapshot. It is like a web page with some more information about just that guidepost. I really want to know more about vocabulary and expanding word knowledge, you can go to that snapshot and read a little bit more about that.

We also have a focus bulletin and that focus bulletin is where those resources, the empathy interview resources and it is where the link to Emily's video is. And there's a couple other videos in there too that we do not have time to show you. The one with the little hand gestures is in there too. But you can see those videos later when you have a chance.

And of course, the self-paced course. Looking forward to more coming soon. We are excited to share new resources and professional learning with you all. I see that there are questions which we will get to. I also just really want to share. I should have mentioned this at the beginning. Everything comes from so much research. I've abbreviated references.

But to see the full list of references and where I'm getting all this information when I say oral language is important, you can look at the reference of any of the snapshots or the research-based guideposts for equitable literacy instruction to know that this isn't just ideas out of my head. I would appreciate it so much if you would scan this QR code and take a survey about this webinar because we carefully look at your feedback and we use that to inform new offerings and other webinars.

Please fill this out for me. I would appreciate it so much. I'll leave this slide up so that you can scan this QR code. I would love to get our list of questions as well to see if there's any questions, I can answer for you all. Lots of questions, so give me a moment to look at the list of questions here.

WIDA's research team did our best to look broadly. We focus on research that was specifically done about multilingual learners. Research on monolingual readers. What is in the guideposts is primarily research on multilingual learners. And the citation for the Martinez 2018 is at the end of the slide, so you can look there, and it's also in the guideposts, so you can look there as well. It's a wonderful article, I recommend it.

What do folks do for level 1 and 2? This is a question that we've gotten from many, many people because, and I was there too, I was a high school and middle school teacher and it's a real challenge and there's a lot of pressure coming from all different directions.

And we are working on something for this special group of students. All I have to say on that is stay tuned. Hopefully we'll have something useful for you soon. And if you want to be in touch, if you want to support development, reach out to us, you can share.

Guideposts for Reading Instruction with Multilingual Learners

If you want to work with us, we really invite classroom educators to collaborate with us so that we can make sure that whatever we develop is realistic and useful for you. And we are getting close to time. I will turn it back over to Hannah.

Is there anything else? I just encourage people to scan this QR code and take this survey. Everyone will get an e-mail with the recording when that is posted online. Great, thanks so much for joining.

See the WIDA Accessibility Statement on the WIDA Policies Page for more information. Contact the WIDA Client Services Center at 1-866-276-7735 or email help@wida.us.