Massachusetts English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC) Minutes
May 29, 2015
8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Double Tree by Hilton Hotel (formerly 4 Points Sheraton) - Leominster, Massachusetts

Organizing Committee: Carla Bruzzese, Ann Feldman, Kathy Frye, Jody Klein, Lisa Kowaleski, Kathy Lange-Madden, Paula Merchant, Margaret Serpa, Helen Solorzano, Jaana Thorarensen.

I. Happenings in Commonwealth: (See Ann Feldman's slideshow posted on www.matsol.org after member sign-in – Go to resources from MELLC meetings).

II. Cultural Competency: Building Family Connections / Vula Roumis: Department Head of Bilingual and ESL Services K – 8 and Jariel Vergne: Spanish Bilingual Counselor / Brockton Public Schools.

- Our Diversifying Nation: 2000 US Census data - by 2050 - 30% of total population will be Hispanic. See http://www.pewhispanic.org
  o There are differences between varying Spanish speaking cultures
  o This was the 1st year ever that Mexican immigrants did not supersede immigrants from all other countries combined.
  o 7% of K - 12 students had at least one unauthorized immigrant parent in 2012.

- How can you engage families if you don't understand families? There is a Family Engagement standard for teachers in the new MODEL Teacher Evaluation System (www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/model/PartIII.pdf). See page 69 for Standard III: Family and Community Engagement
  o Indicator III-A: Engagement: Welcomes and encourages every family to become active participants in the classroom and school community.
  o Indicator III-B: Collaboration: Collaborates with families to create and implement strategies for supporting student learning and development both at home and at school.

- Brockton Public Schools
  o Relevant statistics: 23% of Brockton’s population are ELLs: 55% Cape Verdean, 25% Haitian, 25% Spanish-speaking, 4% Portuguese-speaking.
  o When we talk about cultural and linguistic diversity, the numbers of ELLs are not the only numbers to consider. (FLNE: First Language Not English) Students who speak a language other than English at home represent a much larger percentage of the overall population in Brockton (as in most other districts)
  o Cultural Proficiency Project: This project was started because of the changing demographics in Brockton, lack of resources in the community (e.g. doctors who speak the languages of the families there), challenges in the
district because of the increase of culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families (e.g. Ecuadorians who are SLIFE and speak Quechua, not Spanish. Teachers are asking how to support families without schooling, and the increasing academic demands (We've done a lot with curriculum, PARRC, but no discussion about these challenging issues.)

- Socio-emotional issues (more than just academics):
  - Trauma for Haitian students after the earthquake (foreign school system, trauma, living with family they are unfamiliar with) — this has an IMPACT on second language acquisition!
  - Recent volcanic eruptions in Cape Verde
  - Families immigration narrative: not every family is alike.

- Effects of Immigration and Having an Undocumented Family Member — affects second language development - 1 in every 5 children in US is the child of an immigrant

- Children less likely to participate in non-parental programs (Head Start, private preschools)

- Lower cognitive development, higher rates of depression and anxiety — Reasons: removal of parent causing child separations, limited access to public programs to benefit children's development, work conditions, psychological distress and economic hardship, less likely to contact police, not knowing their rights.

- Culture and Language Impact
  - Parents are willing to come if they feel safe.
  - Children are less likely to attend preschool. No exposure to education
  - Papers sent home not translated (for low incidence or indigenous languages)
  - Translation of report cards….do parents know what it means (IEP, grades). Do they know how to advocate for their children?

- Deeper impact:
  - English speaking child at home….screening of info parents are getting from their children.
  - PT Conferences: In other countries this is not the norm / parents don't have skills to negotiate this process.
  - Children may come from illiterate homes
  - Socialization (how they learn to socialize - children become acculturated before their parents) — Causes fragmentation at home
  - Students who have a strong identity in their native culture, they tend to do better (this affects incarceration rates, drop-out rates) — students who grow up bilingual and bi-literate are the most successful
  - Once students exit from the program, their support is lost (traumatic). How do families and students do when they transition out of the program?
Exposure to trauma: extreme poverty (direct affects learning), extreme violence (e.g. Puerto Rico rate of murder is much higher than US), loss of family (earthquake, etc.).

- What are we working on in Brockton:
  - 3 adjustment counselors are assigned during an administrative internship. Cultural and linguistic sensitivity to our parents
  - Research data: benefits and implications in becoming culturally proficient and its impact in classroom and community
  - As School Adjustment Counselors we brought in a mental health, and community support lens to the discussion.
  - New PD for staff, we created a department to ENGAGE the community.

- Proposal and Plan - Surveyed community (Haitian Cape Verdean Spanish) - what programs are you interested in. District already has Parent Academy IN ENGLISH. Translations of this information DO NOT WORK (of the same academy courses). They may not be interested (What may be more successful: What are your rights?) What do you want to learn more about (computers, rights, how does my child get into college – most of the time info is given to teenager, not parents about financial aid, community violence - how it affects my child - they don’t know what bullying means). These are the goals for the program:
  - Family and Community Engagement for our bilingual and monolingual non-English speaking community. Must offer child care, neighborhood health center presentation, MIRA came down – spoke about rights, offered IN ALL THREE LANGUAGES.
  - Professional Development for Families: create a program based on what families want and need.
  - Professional Development for teachers - discussion around reason for becoming culturally competent, cultural information about different diverse communities, and then the HOW TO...
  - Professional development for Front office staff, administrators, lunch room staff, custodial staff.
  - An office/department that is dedicated to engaging and collaborating with all of our families and communities, based on the needs of the community, in a culturally and linguistically inclusive way.

- Outcomes: Received an immigrant grant which allowed them to do the following:
  - Complete professional development sessions (including those for paraprofessionals, new teacher orientation, all Head Starts in the Brockton area, participated in Global Schools PLCs, local schools presentations by Jariel)
Create Brockton Public Schools Family Advocacy and Engagement Center in Brockton. (see newspaper article about the Center: http://www.enterprisenews.com/article/20150330/NEWS/150339782)

Brockton hired a Spanish speaking advocate (Barbara Alicea), a Cape Verdean speaking advocate (Adele Gomes) and a Haitian/French speaking advocate (Jean-Christophe Louis). – they each work 19.5 hours per week. They rotate the advocates so advocacy center is staffed ALL DAY to accommodate parents. First responsibility: go out to community to make contacts (hospitals, every single agency for information and networking). Advocates attend every single event in the city. Advocates take families to Children’s Hospital, arrange for taxis, provide interpretation services. They help families to negotiate paperwork. They provide a safe place for parents to go that goes beyond academics.

The mission and values related to family engagement is included in Brockton’s Strategic Plan and is supported by the Superintendent of Schools.

Surveyed parents to find out about their needs. Gave out the survey in ESL classes and events. Did it non-verbally – “If we offer a program, what time will be best (boxes to check), is here anything you would be interested in (academic, health, community, karate). Less language, less words. Which school would you like it in, days of the week (#1: response is that parents wanted ESL classes).

Future Areas of Focus

- Implementation of proposed community engagement workshops
- Continue to develop Advocacy and Engagement Center
- PD: How can teachers and schools practice cultural competency in their local settings?
- PD that is designed for specialist and support personnel. Speech, nurses, occupational therapists, etc.
- Collaboration with local institutions: Bridgewater State University and UMass Dartmouth.
- The district offers ESL classes for parents, but there is a wait-list of 2000 parents.


Most parents come from Guatemala and Mexico. Languages spoken in the district: Spanish primarily. Many parents are illiterate and interpretation/translation is done orally. The families are not considered “migrants” because they don’t move, but they ARE seasonal workers. They do not move BECAUSE of their children.
• There are 1000 students total in the Gill-Montague Regional School District and only 64 ELLs; there has been a 236% increase in the last ten years. Rebecca Wright is the full time coordinator.

• Selected areas of focus for the district:
  o Language barriers
  o immigrant isolation
  o undocumented legal status
  o effective communication with parents
  o heritage language support

• What has worked.
  o effective ELL Coordinator working 10 years; critical in establishing trust and confidence within these families
  o Coordinators role includes Spanish speaking liaison responsibilities
  o ESL staff are culturally competent (all are bi-or multi-lingual; have lived abroad or are immigrants themselves.)
  o Coordinator’s office is located in Central Office with other district administrators.
  o On all-staff emails
  o Rebecca is provided a flip phone which is a lifeline with these families.
  o They have MORE participation at family events than American students!
  o Rebecca has been in EVERY SINGLE HOME of the Spanish speaking ELLs.

• Other Support
  o ESL staff have assisted with provided access to legal resources, police, food/medical/dental and other essential resources and social service agencies.
  o Outreach with Organizations
    ▪ Creation of the Franklin County Immigrant Services Coalition (FCISC) fall of 2013: meets in the district bi-monthly, includes community organizations (Local churches, newspapers, children/women advocacy groups, police liaisons, Center for New Americans) - Amherst/Northampton/Turner Falls area - Raised $10,000 for an undocumented young adult who died in an accident in a home for burial, shipping body back to native country, etc.

• Evidence of Success
  o 100% attendance for 3 years pre-K - 5 (45 out of 64 of ELLs are in these grades)
  o Rebecca receives 50 phone calls a week
  o Jimena teaches ESL to families
  o High attendance at events
  o Only 2 students have dropped out of school
  o Most ELLs have gone on to attend post-secondary education.
  o Other ELLs have directly entered the work force.
• Challenges
  o Administrator turnover
  o Most don’t have a bus; have to walk to school
  o There is still no inter-connectedness with dominant English speaking population.

• Parent Interview Questions / Responses
  o Overall positive relationships with school
  o Written translations and oral interpretations
  o Many changes, more ESL teaching staff
  o Direct Spanish instruction for children - validating their heritage language. Would like to have heritage language program. Rebecca emphasizes that speaking Spanish with children is very important.
  o Very important to support your child in school.

• This family outreach has a VERY REAL benefit for students. None of the success would happen if not for the commitment of families.

IV. Cultural Institutes: Building a Reciprocal Understanding of Cultures and Languages / Presented by: Kathy Frye (Director of English Language Learners Education and World Languages), Le Vu (Vietnamese Liaison) and Teresa Schwarz (ELL Specialist /Portuguese liaisons) / Randolph Public Schools

• The district hires liaisons to support families who speak Vietnamese, Portuguese, Spanish and Haitian Creole. The largest population in the district speaks Haitian. Also have Spanish and Haitian. The Vietnamese population is growing. 3 positions are full time, 1 position part time. Liaisons are under teacher contract. District pays for liaisons.
• It is ESSENTIAL to connect second language learning families to the school. Bilingual-bicultural liaisons are the "welcoming center" for these families. They teach families about education in US, they are assessment specialists, they do home visits, foster links between school and home, support families through the registration procedure. Address issues of acculturation.
• Le Vu (Vietnamese Liaison):
  o Language is still a big barrier – helps with translations about policies, procedures, classroom expectations.
  o They come to Le for EVERYTHING (heating bills, job application). She calls their cell phones.
  o Created a family package. Where you call for after school opportunities, housing issues,
- Home visits - not normal in their culture / learning process
- Connect blackboard announcements in Vietnamese (Holidays are different in US)

- Teresa Schwarz (Portuguese liaisons)
  - Screening and placement - looks at all information about a student. Conducts an Interview with each family. Students come in throughout the year.
  - Language assessment review meeting. Includes guidance, after school supports.

- Family Connections, Outreach and Concerns:
  - Liaisons go into classrooms to observe students when needed. Inform parents of student progress. Do this often.
  - Provide families with information about school policies, procedures and expectations. Importance of looking at information in folders sent home.
  - Promote parent involvement
  - Provide liaisons contact information
  - Concerns include language barriers and work schedules

- Supporting the Acculturation Process - How to Streamline and Provide a Bridge for Families.
  - Intersection of Cultures (Students' Native Culture with US culture
  - School Expectations (attitudes regarding role of school, discipline, dealing with authority) - Family Packet at Intake - who to contact when you have questions, summary of handbook (how much is lunch, transportation, assessments like PARRC or MCAS).

- DDMs for Liaisons: They follow a cohort of students throughout the year. Select students at certain levels in certain languages....see how they are fitting into the district. Connecting with student, teacher, family before testing in the fall.

- Multicultural Parent Advisory Council- Parent liaisons, teachers, administrators come together to talk about concerns, what parents want. They wanted the following:
  - ESL classes for adults (Randolph Community Partnership Adult Education / regional - year long waiting list) – now there are classes within district
  - After School Support - high school level only /transportation challenges (there was a high school Transportation in the Community – service learning project - students interviewed School Committee, administrators, etc. - put together a proposal - took this to School Committee and State House.
  - Sharing information about cultures - "we want the community to learn more about us" - Wanted CULTURAL INSTITUTES.
• Cultural Institutes

• Liaisons put together presentations about their cultures - well attended. History, Lifestyle, Schooling, “What do Teachers Need to Know to Support their Students?”
  - Le did Vietnam, Teresa did Cape Verdean (they learn literacy in Portuguese) - became experts on their "extended" heritage.
  - Teachers received PDPs. They turned in projects with ACTION PLANS related to students' culture (e.g. accompanying liaisons on Home Visits).

• Multicultural Family Night - Bridging Between Home and School
  - Student Expo: music playing, greet parents at the door, tours - students act as interpreters.
  - Student Performances (from drumming to Asian Dragon, to dances, singing)
  - Potluck Dinner
  - Cultural Exchanges

V. The Early Years: WIDA's Early ELD Standards. Presenters: Jennifer Amaya Thompson, MA Dept. of Early Education - jennifer.amaya-thompson@state.ma.us, Barbara Cohen: barbaraharbisoncohen@gmail.com and Anne Dolan: adolan@matsol.org

Jennifer Amaya Thompson:

• 900 responses from a community assessment re: dual language learners. What they learned: There is a high need for professional development support.
• Qualified for Early Learning Challenge Grant in the MA office for early learning. Partnered with WIDA and took the $80,000 to develop standards for children 3 - 5 years old.
• Tested standards, got feedback, master cadres, 34 hour training. Brought them back to the field. Department JUST approved these standards this spring! 8 - 10 family groups were trained (Brockton did one). Wonderful resource: calendars for families incorporating early learning tips in several languages (see resource links at end of minutes). Strategies re: work on families. Went from $80,000 to over $600,000 in 2 years (Race to the Top Funds).
• Anne Dolan and Barbara Cohen were part of the Master Cadre. There were 52 trainers trained in Wisconsin. Will release the list of the trainers in the near future.
• How are these Early Years standards the same and different from the regular standards?
  - They are available in 5 languages (Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Haitian Creole, Portuguese) – all available on the website.
Based on the same WIDA Guiding Principles (10)
- The framework is the same (Can-Do philosophy, guiding principles, age-appropriate academic language in socio-cultural contexts, performance definitions, strands of model performance indicators):

- Early Years Can-Do’s are “under construction”

- Standards are focused on LANGUAGE / development of language. Age-Appropriate Academic Language. They are different from the WIDA Standards from grades Pre-K to 12. (The language of social and emotional development, the language of early language development and literacy, the language of mathematics, the language of science, the language of social studies and the language of physical development)

- Standards hold teachers accountable to intentionally develop student language.
- They go deeper by age level - 2.5 to 3.5, 3.5 to 4.5, and 4.5 to 5.5 - at this level there is a great deal of specificity based on development.
- There are three levels of Model Performance Indicators: Entering, Developing and Bridging
- Coming attraction: The language album - portfolio assessment
- There are 28,000 in the state who are 3 - 4 years old in the public school system.
- They are working on an observational assessment aligned with the standard which may be available in 2016. They just received the PRE K extension grant. Must do a pilot. Boston, Holyoke, etc.

Anne Dolan and Barbara Cohen:

- From theory to practice....discussions and hands on activities to activate best practices for DLLs (dual language learners).
- Master Cadre PD Topics
  1. Dual Language Learners
2. DLL Language Development
3. School Readiness
4. Home Language
5. Sociocultural Context
6. ELD Standards

**Focusing on DLLs: (Professional Development Preview)**

- **Definition of DLLs:**
  Age: birth to 8 years old
  May be born in US or outside
  Organizing two or more languages/grammatical system simultaneously

- **Primary Areas of Language Development: What is Unique for Dual Language Learners?** Activity: Each table should focus on one.
  
  - **Phonology** - different sounds in each language, lack of certain sound/sound combinations, learning the sounds in L1 is different than L2 (ma-me-mi-mo-mu vs. letter name and sound). Contrastive analysis charts.
  
  - **Morphology** - learning two different systems; children might apply certain morphemes in one language to another (carry-over), endings - ed is pronounced differently depending on certain rules.
  
  - **Semantics** - trans-languaging. Some languages the verb doesn't change, in English is does change, order of words.
  
  - **Syntax** - contrastive analysis – knows the rules and patterns that are distinctly different, develop two language simultaneously may pose challenges. Dimension of TONE that English doesn't have. Getting sufficient input about two languages by someone who understands both languages.
  
  - **Pragmatics** - Things have to be explicitly taught. They have to see it to understand it. Putting it into a play context.

- **Dual Language Learners' Home Language.** Understandings that have NOT gone out to teachers about the value of speaking L1 at home.
  
  - The Role of Home Language is incorporated into standards (see page 12 in handout). "At all levels of language acquisition, HL and English language development 1) influence and reinforce each other and 2) mediate understanding, construction of meaning, and demonstration of knowledge."
There was a huge collaboration between Head Start and WIDA. 1/3 of children in Head Start are DLLs. Head Start Series is excellent / The Importance of Home Language Series. We did a jig-saw of the Benefits of Bilingualism (global, learning, socio-emotional and cognitive) See http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/fcp/docs/benefits-of-being-bilingual.pdf

- The Benefits of Being Bilingual
- The Gift of Language
- The Language of Home and Community
- Language at Home and in the Community
- All above found at: http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/home-language.html

Dual Language Learners Sociocultural Contexts:

- Greetings
- Leave
- Takings
- Asking permission
- At the doctor
- At the store

Looked at a Language Snapshot of Jorge (page 10)

Looked at a typical activity for Kindergarten and Performance Definitions on pages 12 – 13. What would a student need for support? It is INTENTIONAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT, even within the context of play. Planning for Language (page 11) activity. Looking at typical activity in K or Pre-K and how you can advance language using WIDA early years tools.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES will be available as well (tools in the classroom context). There will also be a focus on ELL SPED Pre-K Students: Misdiagnoses. One day institute (Western Massachusetts liaison)

The Early Years: WIDA's Early ELD Standards Resources

- Bulletin: Focus on Early Years #1 - file:///C:/Users/afeldhome/Downloads/WIDA_Focus_on_Early_Years%20(1).pdf
- Bulletin: Focus on Early Years #2 - file:///C:/Users/afeldhome/Downloads/FocusBulletin-WIDA_Focus_on_Early2.pdf
Standards, Overview, Webinars, etc. :
https://www.wida.us/standards/EarlyYears.aspx

Calendars: (Available in six languages)