



Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS)

# Massachusetts Professional Standards for Teachers of Adult Speakers of Other Languages 2021

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## Introduction

### Why Professional Standards for Teachers of Adult ESOL

Teachers in adult ESOL programs enter the field from a wide variety of backgrounds and enrich instruction with multi-disciplinary interests and experiences. At the same time, many instructors recognize the need to become more knowledgeable about language acquisition theories and principles and more effective in language teaching. The Massachusetts Professional Standards for Teachers of Adult English Speakers of Other Languages (hereafter referred to as the ESOL Professional Standards) provide guidance and support to teachers that will assist them in improving their teaching practice and meeting their learners' needs, ultimately resulting in successful English language acquisition.

The ESOL Professional Standards were originally developed in 2014 as one of several standards-based initiatives associated with education reform. Along with [the Massachusetts English Language Proficiency Standards \(MA ELPS\)](#) and the [College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education \(CCRS/AE\)](#), both of which articulate what learners need to know and be able to do, the ESOL Professional Standards outline what effective teachers of adult English learners need to know and be able to do.

### Why the Revised ESOL Professional Standards

The revised standards in this document draw from the original 2014 document and are informed by research- and evidence-based practices on second language acquisition and instruction and developments in the adult ESOL field.

Since the publication of the original ESOL Professional Standards, there have been many changes in adult ESOL in Massachusetts. This revision has updated the original standards to align to and reflect the following:

- The [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA, 2014\)](#), which emphasizes the integration of workforce preparation activities, digital literacy, and civics into adult ESOL instruction
- The [MA English Language Proficiency Standards \(MA ELPS, 2019\)](#), which require increased rigor in adult ESOL instruction
- The [Massachusetts Professional Standards for Teachers of Adult Education \(2019\)](#)
- Developments in research on second language acquisition, neuroscience (the brain and learning), and evidence-based instructional practices
- An increased understanding of and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and culturally responsive teaching practices in adult education
- A significant increase in remote instruction caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased digital literacy demands on teachers working in remote instructional settings
- The [Teaching Skills That Matter \(TSTM\)](#) initiative from the American Institute for Research (AIR) and the Office for Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE), which promotes essential skills, focus areas, and approaches in adult education

Overall, the new ESOL Professional Standards raise the bar for ESOL teachers, just as the MA ELPS raise the bar for English learners. Throughout the document, there are more references to workforce and academic preparation, digital literacy, civics, cultural responsiveness, and research. Some refinements were also made to the organization of the standards to clarify and sharpen the focus of each standard.

## What You Will Find in This Document



- ***Standards Statements***

This document is organized by seven ESOL professional standards. Each standard is a clearly articulated statement of what effective teachers of adult English learners know and are able to do and is followed by additional information.

- ***Guiding Questions***

To encourage teachers to reflect on their own prior knowledge, and to stimulate reflection about the topic, each standard is accompanied by three or four guiding questions. Teachers can review these questions individually or with colleagues to understand how the standard might inform particular needs and goals of the teacher and program.

- ***Supporting Explanations***

Each standard is accompanied by a summary of the relevance and importance of the standard to the ESOL teacher and presents key concepts and prevailing theories and research in linguistics, second language acquisition, education, and related fields. The supporting explanation is followed by a chart that presents what the effective ESOL teacher needs to know and be able to do in order to meet the standard.

- ***Teacher Knowledge (What Effective ESOL Teachers Know)***

Several sample indicators of teacher knowledge accompany each standard. These indicators, supported by research- or evidence-based practices, are the building blocks of the standard and are necessary for meeting the standard.

- ***Sample Applications (What Effective ESOL Teachers Do)***

Each indicator of teacher knowledge is accompanied by several examples of how effective ESOL teachers apply their knowledge into practice. Sample applications are observable teaching behaviors, and answer the question: What does this standard look like in action?

- ***Appendices***

- Appendix A: Summary of ESOL Professional Standards
- Appendix B: Summary of 2021 Revisions
- Appendix C: References

## How to Use the ESOL Professional Standards

ESOL teachers will find several ways to use this document:

- Teachers can use the standards to evaluate their own strengths and to identify areas for improvement. Such self-assessment can be used to shape professional development plans and guide ways to collaborate with other practitioners. See Self-Assessment Tool on the [ACLS website](#).
- Teachers can use the Sample Applications to identify new ideas or practices they would like to try in their own teaching.
- Because the standards reflect current research on and understanding of what effective adult ESOL teachers know and do, teachers can use this information to deepen and broaden their own knowledge of the field and their profession.
- The resources provided may also help practitioners explore targeted topics in more depth.

Adult education program directors may also find this document useful:

- Directors may use it as a tool to aid in hiring, supervising, coaching, and evaluating ESOL teaching staff.
- The ESOL Professional Standards help program directors, lead teachers, and teams of teachers collaborate on targeting and addressing program and staff development needs.

## Where to Find Support

Use of the ESOL Professional Standards is intended to be supported by professional development and training. All ESOL practitioners should pursue professional learning to stay current on new approaches, policies, and materials and to maintain collaborative networks. Professional development opportunities—such as regional and national webinars, courses, and conferences—are increasingly available for teachers to help them build their knowledge base and expand their instructional practices.

The SABES ESOL Curriculum and Instruction Professional Development Center is the state’s go-to provider of high-quality professional development and resources aligned with the ESOL Professional Standards. These professional development opportunities are available online and in-person.

For resources, descriptions of offerings, and registration, visit <https://www.sabes.org/pd-center/esol>. Additional PD support is available for ESOL program directors through the SABES Program Support Professional Development Center: <https://www.sabes.org/pd-center/program-support>.

[The DESE Office of Adult and Community Learning Services \(ACLS\)](#) also provides online resources and support to ESOL practitioners.

## Acknowledgements<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> This document replaces the Massachusetts [Professional Standards for Teachers of Adult Speakers of Other Languages \(2014\)](#), authored by Sarah Young Knowles and Amber Gallup Rodriguez with significant contributions from Dori McCormack, Suzanne Speciale, Olivia Steele, Luanne Teller, and many practitioners from the adult ESOL field.

## The ESOL Professional Standards at-a-Glance

### Standard 1: Principles of Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

The ESOL teacher understands current theories and principles of second language acquisition and applies this knowledge to promote adult learners' English language development.

### Standard 2: Components of Language

The ESOL teacher understands the components of language and the structure and conventions of English and uses this knowledge to inform instruction.

### Standard 3: Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching

The ESOL teacher understands the importance of culture in language learning and creates a culturally responsive and sustaining classroom where students' diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges are valued and incorporated into an inclusive learning environment.

### Standard 4: Curriculum and Instructional Planning

The ESOL teacher designs coherent, rigorous instructional units and lessons that include measurable learning outcomes, optimize student interaction, support the needs of all learners, are guided by SLA principles, and aligned to the MA ELPS.

### Standard 5: Assessment

The ESOL teacher uses a variety of formative and summative assessments to inform and evaluate instruction, develop differentiated learning experiences, measure student learning, and promote learner metacognition.

### Standard 6: Instructional Delivery

The ESOL teacher facilitates language learning by using a variety of rigorous instructional methods and relevant materials that optimize student engagement, encourage productive struggle, foster critical thinking, and address diverse needs, interests, and levels of readiness.

### Standard 7: Professional Growth

The ESOL teacher engages in a continuous improvement process that includes ongoing reflection, self-assessment, goal setting, and high-quality professional development in order to gain greater teaching expertise, develop new instructional practices, increase learner engagement, and improve student outcomes.

## Standard 1: Principles of Second Language Acquisition

The ESOL teacher understands current theories and principles of second language acquisition and applies this knowledge to promote adult learners' English language development.

### Supporting Explanation

Second language acquisition (SLA) theories and principles explain how we learn new languages and describe the factors that influence the language-learning process. What we know about SLA draws from research in linguistics, education, neuroscience, and cognitive and developmental psychology. While research has not identified a single theory that explains everything about language learning, there is some consensus.

ESOL Professional Standard 1 focuses on the key SLA theories and principles that have emerged from research. Other standards focus on the methods and approaches teachers use to apply these principles in their practice.

A strong foundation in SLA theory helps teachers of adult ESOL evaluate their instructional practices and understand why some of their approaches may be more effective than others. It helps them answer the question: What research-based practices inform my teaching?

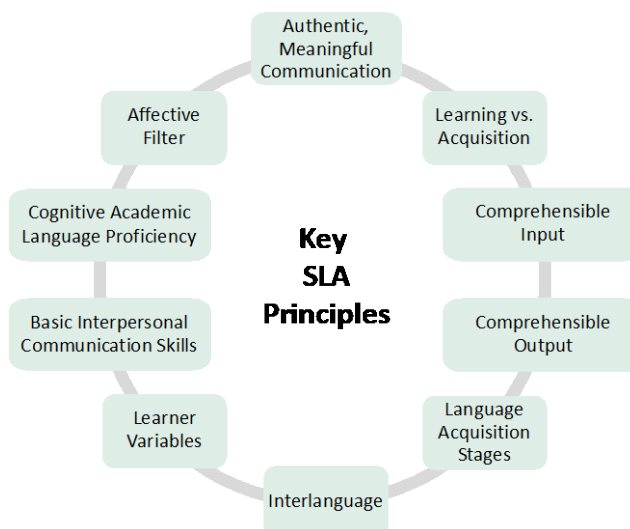
Theories, theorists, and principles move in and out of favor in many professional spheres. The field of second language acquisition has not been immune to this. Over time, various approaches to language teaching have risen and fallen in popularity. New or continued research, however, contributes to our understanding of SLA, and adds value to concepts or practices that may have been considered outmoded. The result is that today teachers of adult ESOL draw from a rich and varied body of SLA research and evidence-based practices to inform their thinking, planning, and teaching.

#### Guiding Questions

- *What SLA principles should guide ESOL teaching practice?*
- *What stages do learners go through as they acquire a second language?*
- *Why is authentic interaction so effective for language learning?*
- *What personal and instructional factors affect how successfully students learn English?*

### Summary of Key SLA Principles

Following are some enduring SLA principles that have emerged from the research and evidence-based practices in the field.





### Authentic, Meaningful Communication

A key SLA principle, with clear implications for the adult ESOL classroom, is the importance of authentic, meaning-focused interaction and communication for the acquisition of any language at any age—a baby learning a first language, a youngster studying a foreign language in school, or an adult immersed in a second language environment. During communicative activities, language learners interact and experiment with language. They make mistakes, notice the gaps in communication that result from these mistakes, and then correct their errors. This ongoing process of interaction, negotiation of meaning, and productive struggle helps students internalize new language in enduring ways (Weinstein et al. 2019).

Additionally, the more opportunities students have to communicate in English and use the language in meaningful, authentic ways, the more engaged they will be in their learning and the more rapidly they will be able to interact successfully in a variety of contexts outside the classroom. To identify what is meaningful to learners, effective teachers take the time to get to know them, inquiring about their interests, backgrounds, and goals. They use materials that reflect learners' diversity, and they provide relevant, rigorous communicative tasks and activities that engage learners in critical thinking.

### Learning vs. Acquisition

Another SLA principle is the distinction between learning and acquiring a language (Krashen 1981).

“Learning” is knowing about the language, for example, rules about subject-verb agreement. “Acquisition” is the ability to use the language in a variety of meaningful communicative contexts.

Learners who have been taught English grammar rules, but not how to apply those rules, have difficulty communicating both in and outside the classroom. So, while some formal instruction about the language is useful for language learning,

effective ESOL teachers know that learners must have multiple opportunities to practice new language. One exposure to new vocabulary or structures is not likely to result in language acquisition. Effective ESOL teachers, therefore, spiral instruction, revisiting skills and topics in more complex ways throughout lessons and units, building learners' skills and confidence, and enabling them to integrate language into long-term memory.

### Comprehensible Input

Comprehensible input refers to language that can be understood by learners, even if they do not understand all the words and structures in it. It is often expressed as  $i+1$ : “ $i$ ” (input) is the familiar language, and “ $+1$ ” is one level slightly higher (Krashen 1981). In practical terms, it means that the content and language used in a lesson should not be “over the heads” of learners, nor should it be so easy that learning does not take place. The effective ESOL teacher presents language that is just beyond the learners' current level of linguistic competence, so as to challenge but not overwhelm them. Occasionally this means that the teacher must scaffold instruction (i.e., provide additional support or modify as needed) to enhance understanding. It is also helpful for a teacher to have some knowledge about the learners' cultures and first language as a way to connect new language or concepts to something already familiar, thus making it more comprehensible.

*$i$  = familiar language*  
 *$i + 1$  = one level higher*

### Comprehensible Output

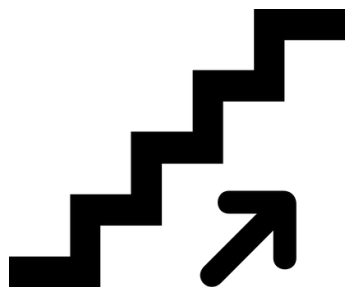
Comprehensible output is another key part of the SLA process. Language acquisition is enhanced when students encounter gaps between what they want to say and what they are able to say, and when they negotiate meaning (Swain 1985).

Learners draw from multiple sources of knowledge (e.g., learned rules, familiar patterns, words they have heard or seen somewhere, models provided by the teacher, and “chunks” of language) as they attempt to communicate. Effective ESOL teachers “push” output by providing opportunities for students to produce language, take risks, receive feedback, and respond appropriately within a specific context. Effective teachers foster a class environment in which everyone feels comfortable making mistakes and provide students with tools and support that help them produce language effectively.

### Stages of Second Language Acquisition

In general, language learners progress through **five predictable stages**. With knowledge of these stages, ESOL teachers can plan engaging lessons appropriate to the students’ language development level.

However, teachers know that developing competence in a language is not a linear process, and that students commonly move back and forth between stages. In addition, certain language structures or skills are acquired naturally earlier in the learning process. Speaking and listening proficiency, for example, typically develops before a comparable level of literacy. A student may master certain irregular verb forms before consistently producing the third-person singular of regular verbs—even though that form is introduced in beginning-level textbooks.



### Interlanguage

Effective ESOL teachers understand the concept of interlanguage, a separate, ever-shifting language “system” that contains elements of both the learner’s first language and the target language. As learners develop English skills, they borrow components of their first language and at the same time overgeneralize learned patterns from their new language (e.g., “My brother has 12 years,” “She study English.”). Such inaccuracies are a natural part of the second language acquisition process and actually evidence of developing competency. A willingness to learn from mistakes is an essential feature of a growth mindset and, as such, enhances language acquisition (Dweck 2006).

#### At-a-Glance:

### Second Language Acquisition Stages

#### Silent Stage

Learners are not yet speaking in English. They may be able to repeat what the teacher says but cannot produce language on their own.

#### Early Production Stage

Learners can usually speak in one- or two-word phrases and short memorized chunks. They develop a receptive and active vocabulary of about 1,000 words.

#### Speech Emergence Stage

Learners can communicate with simple phrases and sentences. They can ask simple questions and initiate short conversations with classmates. Their vocabulary is about 3,000 words.

#### Intermediate Language Proficiency

Learners are beginning to use more complex sentences and to express opinions and thoughts. They ask questions about what they are learning in class. Their vocabulary is about 6,000 active words.

#### Advanced Language Proficiency

Learners are able to produce extended language about a variety of topics. They are able to pursue content-area learning much like a native speaker.

(Krashen and Terrell 1998)

However, without sufficient attention, students can get stuck in faulty patterns, so-called “fossilized” language. There are many reasons why fossilization occurs:

- Speakers may have repeated the same mistake so many times that the inaccuracies sound correct to their ears.
- Speakers are often not aware of their mistakes since these mistakes rarely interfere with communication or impede meaning.
- Additionally, speakers are often not made aware of their mistakes because listeners are not likely to stop a conversation to point them out and break the flow of the interaction.

Thus, effective ESOL teachers accept that language learners will make mistakes, and they correct errors judiciously, depending on the student proficiency and confidence levels, and the focus of instruction.

### Learner Variables

The personal and social contexts of students’ language use have an impact on their ability to learn the language and on the rate of their learning. The effective ESOL teacher takes the time to get to know the individual students in the class, including their backgrounds, identities, and circumstances, and considers these factors when planning and delivering lessons and selecting instructional materials.

Effective ESOL teachers address learner variables by creating an inclusive and culturally responsive class environment, differentiating instruction, and conducting formative assessment to ensure that all students are learning (Burt et al. 2008).

### Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

Adult ESOL students need to develop basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), but they also need cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in order to succeed in secondary or postsecondary education or professional settings (Cummins 2001). Adult learners who have participated in years of uninterrupted quality formal education come to the ESOL classroom equipped with academic learning skills that will accelerate their classroom performance.



#### Personal Variables

- Age upon arrival in the United States
- Age of first exposure to English
- Self-confidence
- Relationship with and support of family members
- Personal goals for English language use
- Current level of economic independence
- Trauma, homesickness, and stressors



#### Sociocultural Variables

- Gender roles of the country/culture of origin
- Relation to the target language/culture
- Exposure to and uses of English outside the classroom
- Cultural orientation(s) to learning/literacy



#### Academic Variables

- Level of literacy in the first language
- First language and writing system
- Nature of previous education
- Learning differences and difficulties
- Level of proficiency sought

However, other adult learners are students with limited and interrupted formal education (SLIFE). These students often acquire BICS at the same rate as their classmates with more formal education (e.g., learning how to converse with co-workers; completing a form), but they may struggle to acquire CALP (e.g., debating; writing an analysis of a news article). They may test into an intermediate or advanced ESOL class based on verbal fluency but will most likely require greater support and time to achieve cognitive academic language proficiency, particularly in reading and writing.

To help all learners develop an advanced level of language proficiency, effective ESOL teachers have high expectations of all students and provide instruction that engages them by:



- Helping students develop strategies for language and academic study
- Developing curriculum around the specific academic and employment needs of students
- Integrating digital tools into instruction to support learning objectives
- Introducing appropriate and increasingly complex text
- Using hands-on group- and project-based learning
- Helping students bridge their oral language to reading and writing
- Connecting students' prior knowledge to new concepts
- Differentiating materials and instruction as needed

(Parrish and Johnson 2010)

**BICS:** language necessary for day-to-day living

**CALP:** language necessary to understand and discuss complex content in academic and professional settings

Additionally important is the development of soft skills: self-awareness; interpersonal interaction; verbal and nonverbal communication styles; problem-solving; teamwork and leadership abilities.

### Affective Filter

The affective filter is a metaphor for the psychological and emotional aspects that interfere with SLA. An unsupportive classroom environment can create a high affective filter, characterized by students having feelings of anxiety, and a lack of motivation and self-confidence—all of which can hinder language acquisition. However, when the affective filter is low, students are more receptive to learning. They are motivated to try out the language, interact meaningfully with their peers, and take risks without fear of failure or embarrassment (Krashen 1981).

Research on learner persistence indicates that students who have experienced success in their learning and have developed a sense of self-efficacy are more motivated to continue studying and learning. Having positive relationships with a teacher and classmates has also been shown to increase learner persistence (Ziegler and Durant 2001).

## Indicators of Knowledge and Sample Applications

**Standard 1:** The ESOL teacher understands current theories and principles of second language acquisition and applies this knowledge to promote adult learners' English language development.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

1. Language acquisition is enhanced when learners are engaged in meaningful communication in authentic contexts.
2. Language learners need multiple and varied opportunities to practice and produce new language in order to acquire it.
3. Adult ESOL students learn best when classroom language is slightly above what they can easily understand and when instruction provides ample support for learning new language.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Contextualize language learning in meaningful content relevant to learners' lives rather than relying on language points predetermined by a textbook
- Develop activities that require learners to use authentic, language to solve real-life problems or situations they may encounter outside the classroom (e.g., applying for healthcare, searching job/career websites, interviewing for a job, advocating for self or family member in a variety of situations)
- Facilitate group/pair activities, student collaboration, and peer teaching to maximize student-to-student interaction and minimize teacher-to-student interaction
- Provide learners with ample opportunities to repeat, recall, practice, and produce new language independently (moving from more controlled to less controlled activities)
- Spiral instruction back on a regular basis to review previously studied language
- Ensure learners practice and produce the language in all skill areas—reading, writing, speaking, and listening
- Identify and teach grammar or vocabulary points within the chosen communicative context and give students several activities to practice using them
- Plan lessons with language and materials appropriate for the learners' proficiency level: not too complex but challenging enough to engage them in meaningful learning
- Expose learners to a variety of natural spoken and written English language and modify as needed
- Scaffold instruction to promote learner success (e.g., model new language; pre-teach vocabulary; provide context through visual/audio aids, manipulatives, authentic objects, digital resources; use sentence frames, graphic organizers, and note-taking templates)

**Standard 1:** The ESOL teacher understands current theories and principles of second language acquisition and applies this knowledge to promote adult learners' English language development.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

4. Language acquisition is accelerated when learners are pushed to produce the language through speaking and writing.
5. Learners progress through predictable stages in their language development.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Include communicative tasks that require learners to: produce new language, notice problems in the form or meaning, receive feedback, and produce more accurate or appropriate language (e.g., revising and editing an original piece of writing, paired speaking and listening exercises)
- Provide learners with language “chunks” and common phrases to promote fluency
- Provide a variety of alternative ways for students to produce language (e.g., recording themselves, meeting privately, writing)
- Identify and respond to features of learners' language production and comprehension that are associated with the different stages of language development
- In the **silent (pre-production) stage**:
  - Provide simple language for learners to listen to and process, without requiring or expecting much language production
  - Focus on comprehensible input of high interest content (e.g., healthcare, jobs, community services)
  - Use various media sources (recoded audio/video, live stream)
- In the **early production stage**:
  - Give students the opportunity to use the small set of concrete vocabulary they have through the use of simple yes/no questions, who/what/where questions
  - Emphasize oral communication and include some reading and writing activities about relevant topics
  - Provide level appropriate texts and reading strategies (e.g., previewing, using context clues)
  - Teach the use of digital tools for language learning and accessing information
  - Introduce tier two vocabulary
- In the **speech emergence stage**:
  - Engage students in written and oral communicative tasks about high interest topics (e.g., current events, workforce preparation)
  - Provide and teach strategies for accessing complex texts
  - Teach academic and professional phrases and provide opportunities for students to use them (e.g., summarizing or citing evidence from a text)

**Standard 1:** The ESOL teacher understands current theories and principles of second language acquisition and applies this knowledge to promote adult learners' English language development.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

6. As they progress, language learners produce an interlanguage that contains elements of both their native and target languages, with inaccuracies that are evidence of their developing competency and a natural part of the language learning process.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- In the **intermediate language proficiency stage**:
    - Encourage learners to elaborate their language through expressing more complex and abstract ideas
    - Use students' oral skills as a bridge to writing
    - Provide a variety of complex, informational texts and communicative tasks on a range of subjects
    - Teach additional tier two, as well as tier three vocabulary
  - In the **advanced language proficiency stage**:
    - Enable learners to develop and use specialized content-area vocabulary (e.g., tier three words) and language functions (e.g., academic and professional phrases) that prepare them for spoken and written communication in social, academic, and professional contexts
    - Provide opportunities for learners to write, revise, edit, and rewrite several drafts of their work
    - Teach media literacy (e.g., evaluating veracity of online sources)
  - At **all levels of language development**:
    - Integrate digital literacy and critical thinking skills (e.g., problem-solving, processing and analyzing information)
- Accept some errors as a natural occurrence in students' language development
  - Monitor patterns in language errors and address them by designing instructional activities that target them (i.e., do not necessarily correct them at the time they occur)
  - Motivate students who have "fossilized" language errors to correct them (e.g., by being transparent and frank about the expectations in work and academic environments, and about how speakers with fossilized errors are sometimes perceived as less educated and/or less fluent than they actually are)
  - Help learners develop strategies to correct their fossilized errors (e.g., having them record their speech and listen for errors; presenting correct and incorrect sentences for them to edit)

**Standard 1:** The ESOL teacher understands current theories and principles of second language acquisition and applies this knowledge to promote adult learners' English language development.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

7. Individual learner traits and sociocultural contexts influence language acquisition.

8. Effective language instruction develops learners' Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in addition to their Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS).

9. In a learning environment in which students are relaxed, confident, and motivated (i.e., the affective filter is low), they take risks with the language and their learning is enhanced.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Include materials and activities that reflect the diversity of learners' cultures and circumstances
- Differentiate instruction based on learners' needs and goals (e.g., through leveled reading materials, visual and/or auditory supports, options for demonstrating learning, independent class work)
- Work closely with the program's education advisor to identify and address individual learners' issues, particularly for those with learning differences
- Provide opportunities for students to develop academic English skills in addition to basic communication skills. For example:
  - Teach strategies for language learning and building academic skills (e.g., reading complex texts, writing persuasive essays, giving presentations)
  - Contextualize curriculum for specific career and educational needs
  - Include instruction on professional communication and soft skills
- Integrate digital tools and increasingly complex texts into instruction (e.g., Google Docs for group projects; chapters or excerpts from college textbooks)
- Engage students with tasks that require them to think critically, analyze, interpret, evaluate, and problem-solve
- Provide concrete examples to help learners understand abstract concepts
- Create an inclusive class community and show respect to all learners
- Foster students' self-efficacy and self-confidence and celebrate success
- Employ error correction judiciously, so that learners feel safe making mistakes without fear of judgment
- Encourage learners to experiment with the language and see errors as part of the language acquisition process
- Allow students to use their first language if needed to understand instructions, while being clear that the objective of a lesson is to produce spoken and/or written English



## Standard 2: Components of Language

The ESOL teacher understands the components of language and the structure and conventions of English and uses this knowledge to inform instruction.

### Supporting Explanation

Almost 7,000 distinct languages are currently spoken around the world, and each of those languages has the same building blocks: a system of sounds (phonetics and phonology) that make up the vocabulary words (lexicon, morphology), which combine into ordered phrases and sentences (syntax) that are used to convey meaning in a variety of contexts (discourse) and for a variety of communicative purposes (pragmatics).

Each language system has the ability to create new words or word forms, to ask questions, to make affirmative or negative statements, to give commands, and to describe things that are in the here and now as well as far-removed events, hypothetical situations, or abstract concepts.

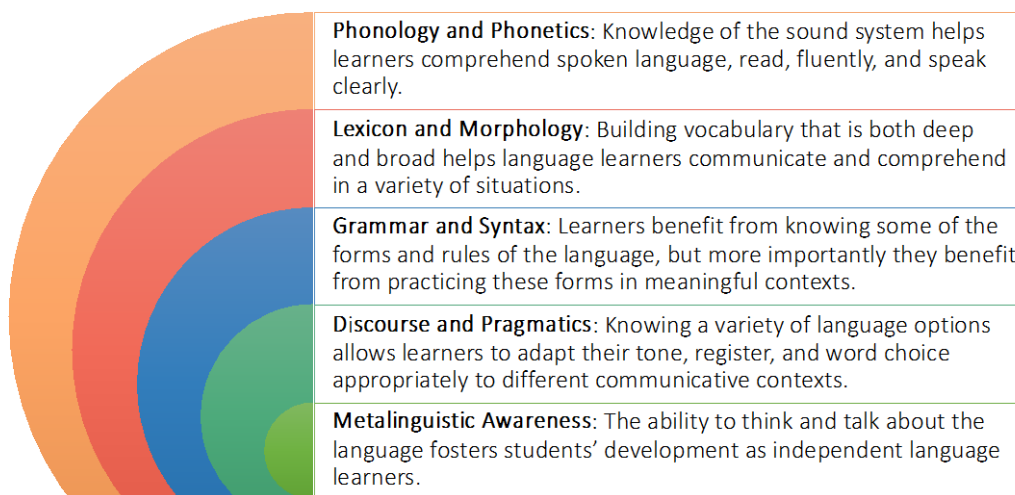
In fluent language use, all the components of language interact and function simultaneously. However, it can be useful to consider them individually, as the patterns and uses of English may differ significantly from ESOL students' home languages. When language learners know something about the components of the target language (i.e., have metalinguistic awareness), they can draw on this knowledge to facilitate their language acquisition. This is especially important when addressing the needs of ESOL Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE).

ESOL teachers need a strong understanding of the components of language to:

1. Provide learners with accurate and appropriate models of English language use
2. Teach students how to use the components
3. Correct student errors

#### Guiding Questions

- *What are the components of language?*
- *Why is it important to teach the components of language?*
- *How does knowledge about a language transfer to practical use of a language?*



## Summary of Language Components



### Phonology and Phonetics

American English has 24 distinct consonant sounds and up to 16 vowel sounds depending on the region where it is spoken. Like other language systems, English has its own syllable structures, its own patterns of stress and intonation, and its own constraints on how certain sounds can be combined to form words. ESOL learners are not expected to develop “native-like” accents or pronunciation, but knowledge of the sound system is important for listening comprehension, literacy, and speech.

Effective ESOL teachers provide instruction on the English sound system to help students read more fluently, and they work with students on improving problematic pronunciation in order to help them communicate more clearly and prepare for work, education, or other situations where clear pronunciation is expected.



### Lexicon and Morphology

Vocabulary development should support learners’ needs in their daily lives as well as in specific domains (e.g., academics, career clusters, and civic engagement). Providing a rich and motivating language environment and teaching vocabulary-building strategies helps learners acquire a richer vocabulary. Because of the limited time students are in class, effective ESOL teachers prioritize which vocabulary to focus on based on the words’ frequency and relevance to the students and the lesson objectives (e.g., selecting words to pre-teach before students read a complex text; identifying high-frequency words).

ESOL students need to build a vocabulary in English that represents both *breadth* (number of word families) and *depth* (understanding of the various meanings, uses, and connotations that a given

word can have). Knowing only one meaning of a word is limiting and inefficient for students working toward language competence. English has many *homophones*, words that look different but sound alike (e.g., here/hear; to/two/too) and *homographs*, words that are spelled alike but have different pronunciations (e.g., lead, tear) and/or meanings (e.g., wave, down). ESOL students also need to know how new words are formed when prefixes and suffixes are attached to root words (morphology).

Effective ESOL vocabulary instruction should include so called language “chunks,” strings of words that together have a different meaning than they do separately. Chunks can consist of:

<i>fixed idioms</i>	“play it by ear” “long time no see”
<i>phrasal verbs</i>	“turn off” “look up”
<i>collocations</i>	“strong coffee” “make the bed”
<i>formulaic speech</i>	“Nice to meet you” “How’s it going?”

Helping students develop the ability to produce these common lexical phrases promotes their fluency and communicative competence, even at beginning levels.

### Research into Practice



Research on effective vocabulary instruction for language learners suggests the following:

- Providing a rich and motivating language environment that fosters word consciousness (e.g., using authentic language; talking about interesting, or favorite, words)
- Strategically teaching high-utility vocabulary (e.g., pre-teaching vocabulary before students read a text)
- Teaching strategies to help students become adept, independent word learners (e.g., keeping a personal dictionary)
- Using assessment to inform vocabulary instruction (e.g., asking students to use a new word in a sentence)



## Grammar and Syntax

A *grammar* is a set of rules that every language follows for forming words, phrases, and sentences. Language learners rely more than native speakers on knowing and understanding these rules, especially if they are significantly different from those of their first language. Native speakers, in contrast, may not know the rule to explain why a sentence is correct; they just know that it sounds right. ESOL learners benefit from understanding the differences in form, meaning, and use to avoid making grammatical errors (e.g., incorrect verb tense *I am going yesterday* instead of *I went yesterday* or incorrect preposition *I walked to the store* instead of *I walked by the store*). Instruction on grammatical forms accompanied by a lot of practice, helps learners communicate more accurately (Larsen-Freeman 2015).

It is also important to understand this component of language in a broader sense: the way we put words and sentences together to create meaning (*syntax*). One aspect of syntax is word order:

- “The dog eats the bone” makes sense.
- “Eats the dog the bone” has the same words but makes no sense.

Beginning ESOL learners may need instruction on the basic word order of English sentences (Subject-Verb-Object: “We are studying English”). As their proficiency increases, so does the complexity of the sentence structure they can use to convey meaning. More advanced ESOL students learn to use more complex structures to elaborate their ideas (e.g., coordination: “My wife is looking for a job, but I already have one”, and subordination: “After I learn more English, I will look for a job”).

To develop writing skills, students also need to learn mechanics—the rules of written language. Effective instruction, therefore, includes work on capitalization, spelling, punctuation, and appropriate formatting. It is important for teachers to recognize the variations of English and that what is referred to as “correct” grammar is often just the conventional “standard.” So, while some explicit

grammar instruction is helpful to learners, it is also helpful for them to have exposure to various authentic forms as well as opportunities to practice in contexts similar to those they will experience outside of class.



## Discourse and Pragmatics

An important element of language acquisition and communicative competence is the ability to adapt to different communicative situations by drawing from a repertoire of language options, such as formality, word choice, specialized vocabulary, sentence style and length, stress/intonation, tone, and body language.

*Semantics* is an important aspect of discourse and pragmatics. The term, in the context of adult ESOL instruction, refers to how language can take on different meanings depending on how and when it is used. Learners should be aware that words, in addition to their dictionary definitions, can convey other kinds of meaning. For example:

**Connotative:** A word carries a particular sense, apart from its primary meaning, depending on the age, culture, values, or experience of the user (e.g., assertive vs. pushy; frugal vs. cheap, cuisine vs. cooking).

**Affective:** A word can reflect the feelings and attitudes of the speaker, such as annoyance, relief, or sarcasm. Tone, intonation, and facial expression help communicate affective meaning (e.g., a student who has learned to use *Great!* to indicate agreement might feel confused hearing a conversation where it used sarcastically).

ESOL students need to be aware of the language appropriate for conveying meaning in different contexts and to adapt their language as needed (e.g., “code-switching” from less to more formal speech). Talking to a supervisor or writing an incident report at work is different from chatting with or texting a friend. Carefully chosen words, expressions, and language structures are key to accomplishing specific communicative tasks.

Students also benefit from learning how these elements, particularly body language and levels of formality, differ from those in their first language and culture. It is common in the United States, for example, to call teachers by their first names, whereas this level of informality is not the norm everywhere. Similarly, body language such as eye contact, certain gestures, and physical space vary from culture to culture. Effective ESOL teachers are aware of and sensitive to these cultural differences.



### Metalinguistic Awareness

Though instructional emphasis is usually on *using* the language, students can benefit from being able to think and talk *about* the language. When we foster students' awareness of language forms, we enable them to take greater control of their own language development and, as a result, become more-independent, lifelong learners (Lightbown and Spada 2008).

#### Cultivating Language Awareness

The effective ESOL teacher helps cultivate language awareness by:

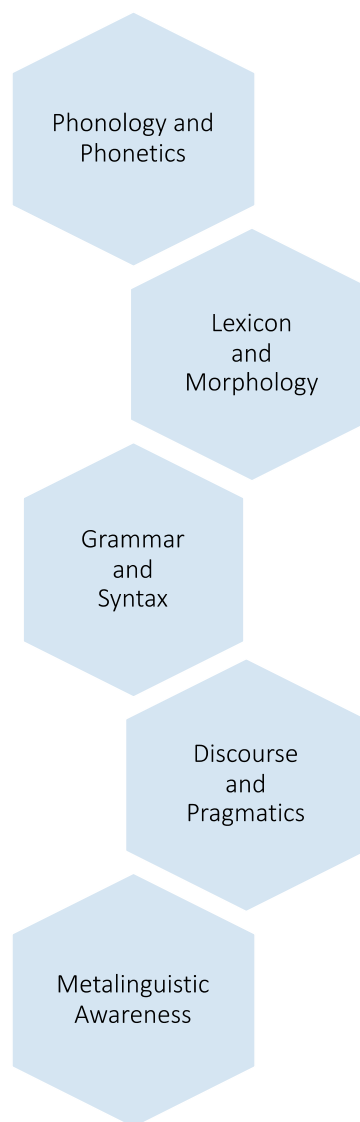
- Helping learners recognize the similarities and differences between their native language and English, and analyze the corresponding rules
- Teaching the appropriate terminology to talk about language
- Teaching strategies for dealing with gaps in communication
- Providing opportunities for students to learn about and then practice specific language forms

It is key to remember that adult ESOL learners come with a variety of schooling experiences, and some may not have much awareness of the workings of their first language. It may not be

appropriate to use technical language or grammatical terms to explain the components of English with beginning learners and SLIFE.

#### Research into Practice

Instruction *about* the language needs to be balanced with ample opportunities to *use* the language. Only through both guided and authentic practice can learners integrate their understanding into genuine and meaningful communication.



## Indicators of Knowledge and Sample Applications

**Standard 2:** The ESOL teacher understands the components of language and the structure and conventions of English and uses this knowledge to inform instruction.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

1. Adult ESOL learners need to recognize, decode, pronounce, and approximate the sounds and sound patterns of English.

2. Adult ESOL learners need to recognize, decode, comprehend, and formulate words in both spoken and written English.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Model and provide examples of clear pronunciation and accurate spelling
- Teach specific sounds, stress patterns, rhythm, and intonation to help learners develop listening comprehension and speaking skills and to provide ample opportunities for practice
- Teach sound-letter correspondence to help learners develop literacy skills (decoding, spelling), pointing out to students there is often no one-to-one correspondence between English sounds and letters
- Provide strategies and tools for overcoming pronunciation difficulties (e.g., use a mirror; record/analyze own speech; use online pronunciation resources)
- Use MA ELP Standard 3–Components of English to guide instruction: Thread A (“decoding”) in the Reading Strand; Thread A (“encoding”) in the Writing Strand; Thread C (“conventions”) in the Listening/Speaking Strand
- Model the use of appropriate level vocabulary
- Teach how to form words using common roots and affixes; show how meaning changes within a word family when suffixes or prefixes are added or deleted (e.g., happy, unhappy, happiness, happily; work, working, worked)
- Describe the various ways of “knowing” a word: pronunciation, spelling, related forms, collocations, synonyms/antonyms, communicative uses, contextualized meanings
- Provide tools and strategies to help learners understand word meanings (e.g., use context and knowledge of word parts, make connections to cognates, identify word families)
- Teach language chunks (e.g., idioms, phrasal verbs, collocations, formulaic speech) to build fluency
- Spiral new vocabulary in all language skill areas
- Provide ample opportunities to use new vocabulary
- Use MA ELP Standard 3–Components of English to guide instruction in vocabulary: Thread B in the Reading and Writing Strands; Thread A in the Listening/Speaking Strand

**Standard 2:** The ESOL teacher understands the components of language and the structure and conventions of English and uses this knowledge to inform instruction.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

3. Adult ESOL learners need to learn the conventions of English grammar and sentence structure in order to understand and formulate accurate, comprehensible, and meaningful phrases and sentences.

4. Adult ESOL learners need to understand and use language that is contextually and semantically appropriate for specific situations, purposes, and relationships.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Model standard English grammar and usage in the classroom
  - Teach the rules of standard grammar and usage in meaningful, authentic, and communicative contexts
  - Limit the amount of teacher-fronted instruction in order to maximize student-centered practice
  - Provide instruction in mechanics (e.g., capitalization, spelling, and punctuation) to help learners communicate effectively in writing
  - Provide ample opportunities for students to practice these skills and using new grammatical forms
  - Be aware of and address common errors—in grammar, sentence structure, word order—that may be related to learners’ first language
  - Use MA ELP Standard 3—Components of English to guide instruction: Thread C (“grammar”) and Thread D (“conventions”) in the Reading and Writing Strands; Thread B (“grammar”) and Thread C (“conventions”) in the Listening/Speaking Strand
- 
- Model how to integrate appropriate “small talk” into class time (e.g., talk about the weather, weekend activities)
  - Teach and provide opportunities for students to practice
    - Predictable patterns of oral communication (e.g., greetings/leave-taking, conversational turn-taking)
    - Language conventions for specific communicative situations (e.g., job interviews, negotiating agreement/disagreement)
    - Words that carry connotations or emotional meanings, depending on where and how they are used (e.g., thrifty vs. stingy; meticulous vs. picky; scent vs. smell)
    - Choosing language to accomplish specific communicative tasks (e.g., showing friendly interest, apologizing, asking for help, registering a complaint or concern, inquiring about someone’s health, refusing a request, explaining tardiness)
    - Adapting language for different contexts, using appropriate vocabulary, tone, and level of formality (e.g., speaking with a boss or professor vs. chatting with family members or classmates)

**Standard 2:** The ESOL teacher understands the components of language and the structure and conventions of English and uses this knowledge to inform instruction.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

5. Adult English learners benefit from drawing on their knowledge about the components of language to facilitate their language acquisition.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Be aware of and compare and contrast various styles of communicative behavior with those of students' language and culture (e.g., level of formality, personal space/touching, initiation of conversation, offering suggestions/advice, asking personal questions, eye contact)
- Teach writing conventions for real life and academic needs (e.g., parts of an email, memo, essay; citing resources)
- Teach predictable features and patterns in various media (e.g., news stories, opinion pieces, short stories, YouTube videos, online articles, podcasts)
- Provide ample practice using these discourse and pragmatics skills
- Use all strands of MA ELP Standard 1–Focus on Meaning and Standard 2–Organization and Style to guide instruction
- Model the use of metalinguistic awareness (e.g., thinking aloud while editing a piece of writing, correcting a spoken error, looking for the right word)
- Teach students basic linguistic terms and concepts (e.g., parts of speech”) so they can talk and think about their language learning and self-monitor their language use
- Provide students with opportunities to analyze how the choices they make in vocabulary, tone, volume, and body language affect communication
- Teach strategies to identify and repair communication breakdowns (e.g., ask clarifying questions, repeat or rephrase, analyze word choice, edit written work)
- Use all strands of MA ELP Standard 4–Use of Effective Strategies to guide instruction

## Standard 3: Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching

The ESOL teacher understands the importance of culture in language learning and creates a culturally responsive and sustaining classroom where students’ diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges are valued and incorporated into an inclusive learning environment.

### Supporting Explanation

Cultural diversity is one of the defining characteristics of the adult ESOL field. Every person in an ESOL class, including the teacher, has culturally shaped beliefs, values, identities, and ideas about what should be taught, how learning should happen, how students should behave, and how teachers should teach.

Culturally responsive and sustaining teaching (CRST) is an approach to education that centers the content, materials, and activities of a class on students’ cultural diversity (Hammond 2015). Culture, in its broadest sense, encompasses a wide range of characteristics: nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, socioeconomic background, age, ability, and immigration status. The diversity of unique backgrounds among members of the learning community creates complex dynamics as individuals navigate their education, interact with one another, and relate new learning to their lives beyond the classroom.

Effective ESOL teachers have a high level of cultural awareness and know the strengths that each student brings to the classroom. They place students’ cultures at the core of the learning process and utilize the “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students” (Gay 2000). They create classroom norms reflective of the students’ cultures in order to lessen the challenges many ESOL students experience when adjusting to the U.S. classroom.

Additionally, they are introspective and critically self-aware. They understand that everyone has biases shaped by their background and experience, and that their own cultures and implicit biases can influence how they teach—as well as how their students learn. In a culturally responsive and sustaining ESOL classroom, teachers are mindful of the relationship between the values, beliefs, perceptions, and behavioral norms of their own culture and those of their students’ cultures.

#### Guiding Questions

- *What can I do to cultivate a culturally responsive and sustaining approach to my teaching?*
- *How do my own identity, cultural background, and implicit biases influence how and what I teach?*
- *How can I help my students understand cultural, historical, and political influences that have shaped U.S. society?*

Culturally responsive ESOL teachers:

1. Create a classroom environment that is inclusive, affirming, and equitable, fostering feelings of student safety and belonging and increasing student engagement and motivation
2. Recognize students’ diverse identities and value them as assets
3. Use curriculum and instructional materials with diverse perspectives
4. Develop high expectations for all learners, foster critical thinking skills, civic engagement, and a commitment to social justice
5. Critically assess their own biases, assumptions, and beliefs and understand how these can influence instruction



While ESOL teachers may recognize these concepts as general “best practices,” what distinguishes culturally responsive and sustaining teaching from more traditional approaches is the **intentional**, **deliberate**, and **sustained** focus on learners’ cultures as the basis for instructional planning and delivery.

### Why is Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching Important in ESOL?

Culturally responsive ESOL teachers not only promote intercultural and global awareness among learners. They facilitate language learning by contextualizing language skills in content that is relevant and meaningful, which motivates students to come to class, participate, and learn (Ladson-Billings 2008; Atkinson 2014; Hammond 2018). Further, by increasing learners’ awareness of U.S. culture and history, including discussions about systems of oppression, power and privilege, and individuals’ roles and responsibilities in civic society, culturally responsive teachers encourage civic engagement and enhance their students’ sociopolitical consciousness. Lastly, by providing rigorous instruction and having high expectations of all students, culturally responsive teachers help prepare learners for postsecondary education and the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace.

### Key Practices for a Culturally Responsive and Sustaining ESOL Class

#### A Welcoming Climate of Mutual Respect, Inclusion, and Affirmation

Effective ESOL teachers model inclusive, respectful behavior; create space for students to share their points of view and listen without interjecting. They critically examine class materials for culturally appropriate images and themes. They understand that hurtful, disparaging, insulting, or disrespectful remarks about other students’ culture or identity are unacceptable. They create ground rules for respectful discourse and are prepared to manage difficult conversations.

#### Students’ Identities as Valuable Assets

Effective ESOL teachers devote time and effort to learning about their students’ backgrounds, present circumstances, and identities. They value differences as assets, not deficits in need of remediation. They gather information through program-wide needs assessments and provide opportunities for students to write and speak about themselves and share with their classmates. Effective ESOL teachers also recognize that intercultural awareness is part of their ongoing professional development and take time outside of class to learn about their students’ countries of origin and about the communities where students live and work.

As teachers foster relationships with students, they embrace the diversity of learners’ experiences—the patterns of triumph and trials in each of their respective journeys. For many immigrants, the chance to come to the United States is an exciting path toward new opportunities. For others, challenging circumstances in their home countries may have motivated or forced the decision to move to a new country. Additionally, many English learners are not immigrants at all, but American citizens who have come to the mainland from territories such as Puerto Rico. Some language learners come with basic literacy skills or less, while others have advanced professional degrees from institutions in their home countries. Some students are returning to school after long interruptions in their education and some have lived in the United States for years before enrolling in English classes.

Adult English learners also vary in terms of their goals and reasons for learning English. Some seek college, careers, or community engagement for themselves and for their children; some wish to integrate fully into U.S. society, and perhaps become citizens, while others prefer to maintain a closer connection to their own

communities. Some individuals feel less of a connection to their home cultures as they forge new identities based on other aspects of themselves (e.g., sexual orientation, gender role, religion). Effective teachers are mindful of the individuality and diversity of their learners in all of these areas and avoid overgeneralizing or making erroneous assumptions.

Furthermore, effective ESOL teachers are aware of individual students who have suffered trauma, or spent years in refugee camps, or made dangerous journeys to escape intolerable conditions. Trauma caused by war, persecution, or personal loss can significantly influence learning, as can the stress resulting from economic instability, uncertainty about the future, or anti-immigrant sentiment. These students may be preoccupied and distracted, or potentially re-traumatized during class time. Therefore, when planning and delivering lessons, culturally responsive teachers critically examine content and activities, even the most seemingly innocuous, for potential insensitivity (e.g., asking students to tell their immigration-journey story), and adjust as necessary. They also differentiate instruction for those learners who may need more time or support, working closely with program advisors to address these learners' needs (Perry 2006).

Culturally responsive ESOL teachers appreciate that being multicultural and multilingual is an asset. They support their students in maintaining core aspects of their cultural identity and affirm students' strengths by acknowledging important positive aspects of students' cultures, histories, and identities.

### Curriculum and Materials with Diverse Perspectives

Research confirms that students' motivation to learn increases when their cultures are represented in instruction (Gay 2000). As an integral part of their curriculum planning, effective ESOL teachers regularly develop units and lessons on students' individual cultures as well as on general topics related to culture. They may focus on, for example, the history or current events in students' home countries, as well as explorations of concepts such as assimilation and the relationship between language and culture. Culturally responsive ESOL teachers ask for student input when planning curriculum and instruction and invite students to suggest topics and materials that reflect their own diversity.

As learners navigate life in the United States, they benefit from learning about the diversity of cultures and identities within the country, and from personal interaction with members of various communities. Effective ESOL teachers help learners recognize that "U.S. culture" comprises many different cultures, including those of immigrants, and choose materials that reflect diverse perspectives (e.g., demographic data; readings about individuals from historically marginalized groups; interviews with people from various U.S. cultures).

This gives learners a more accurate and nuanced picture of American society and helps prepare them for what to expect outside of class. It exposes them to a variety of accents, dialects, and regionalisms, increasing their confidence interacting with English language speakers from different backgrounds. Establishing a multicultural context for their learning facilitates their language acquisition and affirms that they are part of the cultural fabric of the United States.

### High Expectations, Critical Inquiry, and a Focus on Social Justice

Some students come to adult education with negative experiences in their prior schooling and a belief that innate ability, more than effort and perseverance, explains academic success. Culturally responsive ESOL teachers believe that all students can succeed and challenge any misconceptions students may have about their own abilities. They set high expectations for all learners, and clearly communicate and build these

expectations into class routines. They help students accept mistakes as a valuable part of the learning process, encourage risk-taking, and intentionally use strategies that help students master challenging material through persistence and focused effort (Dweck 2006).

Effective ESOL teachers go beyond surface level culture (e.g., folkloric dress, foods, holidays) and develop lessons that help students explore deeper culture (i.e., complex, culturally based beliefs and behavioral norms). Culturally rich and diverse instruction enables students to develop their language skills by reading, writing, listening to, and speaking about topics that are relevant to their social, economic, and cultural realities.

Part of affirming students' strengths in the ESOL class is recognizing and fostering their intellectual and critical-thinking abilities. Effective ESOL teachers encourage learners to develop critical inquiry by engaging in complex concepts and texts; analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information; and formulating, supporting, and articulating their own ideas. They differentiate instruction to accommodate learners' various proficiency levels, interests, and learning preferences. They incorporate strategies that assist students in becoming proficient users of English adequately prepared for postsecondary education and careers.

Culturally responsive teachers also do the hard work of becoming skilled at facilitating complex, sometimes difficult, class discussions about power, equity, representation, and discrimination. They know that these conversations are necessary in order to equip their students with the language skills necessary to navigate systems of power designed to advantage certain groups over others and empower them to become agents of change in their communities (e.g., writing letters to legislators, newspapers, school committee).

### **Critical Assessment of Assumptions and Beliefs**

Effective ESOL teachers critically assess how their own cultures, assumptions, and beliefs affect their worldview and approach to teaching. They pay particular attention to areas of potential implicit bias that could influence their instruction or interactions with students. They are aware of differing values around concepts such as individuality, formality, gender, personal space, time, and hierarchy, and they recognize that these values may inform the instructional choices they make. Rather than assuming that their own culturally informed values automatically prevail in class, they critically examine their instructional choices and invite students to share their perspectives.

They explore their own implicit biases and understand that these unconscious beliefs may influence their expectations of, and interactions with, students. They participate in professional development opportunities to increase their intercultural and self-awareness, as well as their critical self-assessment skills. These practices are particularly important for teachers from the dominant culture in the United States (i.e., white, of European descent, heterosexual). They help teachers recognize that there is a power differential, both perceived and actual, between themselves and their students, and develop ways to mitigate its effect on classroom dynamics (Goodman 2020).

## Indicators of Knowledge and Sample Applications

**Standard 3:** The ESOL teacher understands the importance of culture in language learning and teaching, and creates an inclusive, culturally responsive and sustaining classroom that ensures students' diverse backgrounds, identities, challenges, and strengths are valued and incorporated into the learning environment.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

1. Creating a classroom environment that is welcoming, affirming, and equitable fosters feelings of student safety and belonging and increases student engagement and motivation.

2. Adult ESOL learners' diverse identities, languages, and cultures are strengths to be appreciated and explored in the classroom.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Build relationships with students so that they feel valued and respected
- Know and correctly pronounce students' names
- Include immigration experiences as a context for language skill development, while being sensitive to students who have experienced trauma
- Invite sharing of students' experiences around integration into their communities, both positive and negative, and the strategies used to build comfort in a new environment
- Use questionnaires, surveys, or one-on-one conferences to learn about students' interests and learning preferences
- Include classroom activities designed to activate students' prior knowledge
- Create opportunities for students to share aspects of their cultures that are particularly important to them, always offering choices to ensure that students share only what they are comfortable with sharing
- Integrate learners' identities as multilingual and multicultural individuals into instructional activities, including benefits as well as challenges
- Incorporate examples of immigrants from students' countries who have achieved success (e.g., in politics, business, pop culture, sports)
- Contextualize learning in content that is relevant to students' lives (e.g., a research project about issues affecting students' community)
- Allow students to use their first language to process class content, while maintaining language production in English as the learning objective
- Have students present or write about artifacts/traditions that represent their culture and/or history
- Integrate literature written by authors from global regions and countries in curriculum and instruction
- Visit the communities where students live

**Standard 3:** The ESOL teacher understands the importance of culture in language learning and teaching, and creates an inclusive, culturally responsive and sustaining classroom that ensures students’ diverse backgrounds, identities, challenges, and strengths are valued and incorporated into the learning environment.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

3. Having high and transparent academic expectations of all learners promotes greater success.
4. Thinking critically about deeper aspects of culture, language learners gain a more nuanced understanding of their own, their classmates’, and U.S. cultures.
5. Using curriculum and materials with diverse perspectives on various aspects of culture motivates and engages learners.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Help students set realistic and rigorous academic goals and integrate those goals into instruction
- Define high expectations for the quality of student work through assessment rubrics and checklists, and teach students how to use them
- Share unit outcomes and lesson objectives with students so that they know what they are expected to learn
- Explore texts around the theme of persistence, acknowledge student effort, and encourage persistence, particularly when students are struggling
- Develop lessons that investigate aspects of “deep” culture in addition to “surface” culture (e.g., attitudes and expectations vs. food and holidays)
- Develop lessons and activities that invite students to:
  - Ask and answer questions about cultural practices, beliefs
  - Critically examine their own culturally informed beliefs
  - Analyze behaviors in U.S. cultures, and compare and contrast these with their own
  - Identify and describe the significance of cultural images and symbols—in U.S. cultures and their own
- Address topics like implicit and explicit cultural and racial bias, and Eurocentrism in texts or images
- Include civics topics related to rights and responsibilities and community issues
- Use the MA ELPS Civics and Navigating Systems standards in curriculum and instruction
- Include topics related to students’ backgrounds and cultures in the curriculum (e.g., texts written by authors from learners’ cultures, texts that reflect non-Eurocentric ideas and cultures)
- Select instructional materials that reflect the variety of cultures in the U.S., including those of historically underrepresented people
- Include texts that show characters as multi-dimensional and portray them in non-stereotypical ways
- Select texts that present multiple perspectives on the same event, including perspectives of historically marginalized communities

**Standard 3:** The ESOL teacher understands the importance of culture in language learning and teaching, and creates an inclusive, culturally responsive and sustaining classroom that ensures students’ diverse backgrounds, identities, challenges, and strengths are valued and incorporated into the learning environment.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

6. Reflecting on their own beliefs and cultural values helps teachers understand how these beliefs influence their instructional decisions and affect their students’ learning.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Model openness and a willingness to reflect on one’s own beliefs and values
- Develop an understanding of one’s own cross-cultural awareness and cultural competence as an ESOL teacher
- Acknowledge the extent to which educational norms represent those of the dominant culture, and seek to help students explore those norms (e.g., explain culturally informed expectations of academic writing, class participation)
- Address students’ values and beliefs about specific factors in teaching and learning (e.g., the role of the teacher, class participation)
- Invite students to experience and compare different instructional approaches and preferences

## Standard 4: Curriculum and Instructional Planning

The ESOL teacher designs coherent, rigorous instructional units and lessons that include measurable learning outcomes, optimize student interaction, support the needs of all learners, are guided by SLA principles, and aligned to the MA ELPS.

### Supporting Explanation

Effective ESOL teachers plan instruction that supports learners in developing the language, critical-thinking skills, and content knowledge necessary to participate fully in 21<sup>st</sup>-century employment, education, and civic life. ESOL unit and lesson plans are grounded in principles of second language acquisition and:

1. are part of a **coherent** curriculum aligned to the MA ELPS
2. are well-structured and **cohesive**
3. **contextualize** language development in relevant, inclusive, and culturally responsive content
4. foster students' critical-thinking skills through **rigorous** content and activities
5. maximize **student engagement** and **interaction**, and
6. are designed appropriately for both **in-person** and **online** classes.

#### Guiding Questions

- *What important elements should I consider when planning instruction?*
- *How do I design units and lessons that address the learning needs and goals of my students?*
- *What is Backward Design, and why is it an effective approach to unit and lesson planning?*

Thoughtful, intentional planning prepares teachers to deliver engaging instruction that supports all learners as they progress towards their goals (Gamson and Eckert 2019).



## Planning Instruction as Part of a Coherent Standards-Based Curriculum

Every ESOL program needs a comprehensive curriculum that outlines the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn at each class level. A comprehensive curriculum includes information about the program’s instructional vision, structure, and student community. It has coherence between levels so that students build on what they learned in a previous learning cycle and are prepared for what they will learn in the next. Connections from one ESOL level to another are explicit and understood by both teachers and students.

Effective ESOL teachers share an understanding of how learning experiences as well as expectations evolve from year to year and collaborate effectively to benefit students. They have input into their program’s curriculum development and ensure that their unit and lesson plans align to it.

To guide ESOL curriculum and instructional planning, the MA ELPS articulate what adult English learners should know and be able to do at each level of language proficiency. With benchmarks listed at each proficiency level from beginning to advanced, in the Reading, Writing, and Listening/Speaking strands, the MA ELPS help teachers sequence instruction that progresses to learner goals. In addition to including language skill standards, the MA ELPS also integrate rigorous standards for college and career readiness and for Navigating Systems and Civics. When curriculum and instruction is aligned to the MA ELPS, it is cohesive, coherent, progressive, and rigorous.

A curriculum includes three main components:

- A scope and sequence
- Unit plans
- Lesson plans

A **scope and sequence** presents the long view of instruction and outlines the language skills and related content areas taught over a learning cycle. It shows the progression within each class level as well as across levels—that is, the horizontal and vertical alignment of class levels. While the class levels and language skill development in the scope

and sequence are aligned to the MA ELPS, the selection of unit topics is based on student needs, interests, and goals. Within the scope and sequence, units are sketched out, and then later expanded upon and developed into individual unit plans. The units contextualize language skills in relevant content areas (e.g., the workplace, regional priority industries, education, civic engagement, technology, learning strategies, current events) and are sequenced so they progress to a culminating goal at the end of a learning cycle (Ainsworth and Donovan 2019).

## Planning Well-Structured Cohesive Units and Lesson Plans

**Unit plans** are more detailed versions of the units sketched out in the scope and sequence. A complete well-structured unit plan includes:

- Rigorous learning objectives in both language and content that help prepare learners for 21<sup>st</sup> century employment, education, and civic engagement
- Alignment to priority benchmarks from the MA ELPS
- Tools for measuring progress and assessing the extent to which the objectives are met
- A general outline of sequenced lessons that shows the development of language skills and content knowledge over the course of the unit
- A variety of resources (e.g., authentic materials, digital and print texts, websites, and textbooks) that reflect the diversity of learners’ ethnic, racial, cultural, and academic diversity

For a unit plan to be cohesive, there must be clear alignment of all of the components above.

**Lesson plans** are the individual designs for one or two class sessions in a unit and provide details for how a class will progress from beginning to end. Individual teachers generally develop their own lesson plans and tailor them to address the needs of particular students at a particular time.



Effective ESOL teachers design lessons that are level-appropriate—lessons that challenge yet ensure student success and that foster a sense of self-efficacy and motivation.

A well-structured lesson plan includes:

- Clear, measurable, and rigorous language and content objectives
- MA ELPS benchmarks aligned to the lesson objectives
- Ways for students to demonstrate they have successfully met the lesson objectives
- A progression of activities that gradually increase learners' independent language use
- Transitions from one topic to another that keep students engaged and ensure cohesion
- A variety of activities and rigorous tasks that foster communication and critical thinking
- Differentiating strategies to ensure that all students can access the content
- Diverse resources
- Opportunities for student and teacher to assess progress, check for understanding, and reflect

As with unit plans, effective teachers ensure cohesion in their lesson plans by aligning all of the above components.

The **Backward Design** approach to instructional planning is a useful tool for creating cohesive unit and lesson plans (Wiggins and McTighe 2005). Using this approach, teachers begin the planning process by identifying the learning goals and the desired results of the lesson. Next, they describe what students will be able to do to demonstrate their learning. Finally, they choose the activities that will lead students to demonstrate their learning, thus achieving the stated outcomes of the lesson. By connecting these three parts of an instructional plan, the Backward Design approach promotes cohesion.

The **three basic steps** in **Backward Design** for an ESOL instructional plan are:

### 1. Identify Desired Results or Outcomes

*What communicative task will students be able to do in English by the end of the unit or lesson?*

ESOL teachers generally express “desired results” in two areas: **language objectives:** reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, with related grammar and vocabulary; **content objectives:** the context for how and for what purpose the language will be used.

### 2. Determine Evidence of Learning

*How will students and I assess the extent to which they have met the learning outcomes?*

After writing the desired outcome of a lesson or unit, ESOL teachers determine how students will demonstrate their learning. The instructional plan must describe a culminating task, with clear assessment criteria and methodology, through which students can measure success.

### 3. Design Learning Experiences and Instruction

*What instruction and activities will provide students with enough information, modeling, and practice to complete the culminating task and meet the desired outcomes?*

After determining the learning objectives/outcomes and how students will demonstrate learning, ESOL teachers design instruction that will engage students in the steps leading to the achievement of the desired results.

### Planning for Relevance and Inclusiveness

As noted above, effective ESOL teachers ensure that their curriculum and instruction are relevant to, and inclusive of, all of the students in the class. They do not simply follow an ESOL textbook series but, rather, base their curriculum and instructional plans on a needs analysis that has identified students' backgrounds, interests, present circumstances, and future goals.

When planning instruction, effective teachers use this information to contextualize language skills within content that is meaningful to their students. The content might include such topics as health care, housing, career exploration, community services, or other areas of relevance, and the language instruction would include the vocabulary, phrases, grammatical forms and functions, and discourse patterns commonly used within the particular context.

To ensure that instruction is inclusive and relevant to all learners, effective ESOL teachers create culturally responsive instructional plans. Planning instruction that is inclusive, relevant, and culturally responsive helps teachers create a supportive class environment in which learners are comfortable speaking and taking risks, motivated to learn, and able to recognize the connection between classwork and their lives outside the classroom.

For more details on culturally responsive and sustaining teaching practices, see standard 3 in this document.

### Planning for Rigor

Effective teachers know that adult English learners need more than "survival" English in order to participate fully in 21<sup>st</sup> century work, education, and civic life (Johnson and Parrish 2010). They therefore plan rigorous instruction that will enable learners to develop not only basic conversational skills, but also professional and academic language proficiency, critical-thinking skills, and content knowledge. When planning

instruction, effective teachers hold high expectations of their learners, set rigorous content and language objectives, and design activities that lead learners to their education and career goals.

The MA ELPS integrate college and career readiness into language standards and were created largely to help ESOL teachers increase the rigor in their instruction. Effective teachers refer to the MA ELPS for ways to incorporate workforce preparation activities, academic and professional language, digital literacy, and critical thinking into their planning. They also ensure that learners:

- Engage with complex texts from diverse genres, media, and perspectives
- Cite evidence from texts, both literary and informational
- Build knowledge through content-rich nonfiction

Rigorous instruction balances teacher support with the students' **productive struggle**. Keeping this in mind, teachers design lessons that provide opportunities for students to work through learning challenges independently or with peers, without the teacher immediately offering assistance or providing answers. Through productive struggle, students strengthen their ability to solve problems, analyze information, ask questions, communicate, work with others, and develop other critical-thinking skills and strategies for lifelong, independent learning.

To plan for productive struggle, effective teachers design lessons that **gradually release responsibility** for learning to the students, beginning with more controlled activities and leading to more independent ones. They know their students' proficiency levels and learning preferences, and they design and differentiate activities accordingly so that all learners are challenged.

### Planning for Student Engagement and Interaction

When planning instruction, effective ESOL teachers are mindful of the SLA principle that language acquisition is enhanced by communication and negotiation of meaning. They therefore plan lessons so that most of the time is spent on student to student, rather than teacher-fronted, interaction. They design activities that require their students to engage in authentic communication and collaboration. In a cohesive instructional plan these communicative activities must have a purpose aligned to the lesson's objectives.

Effective ESOL teachers plan how they will introduce new information; monitor activities to ensure that all students are engaged; differentiate instruction and support individual students; check for understanding; move from more controlled activities to more independent, student-directed ones; and assess learning (Fisher and Frey 2013).

### Planning for Online ESOL Instruction

The key components discussed above are essential for both in-person and remote instruction. Just as for in-person classes, instructional plans for remote classes must include:

- Rigorous learning objectives, assessments, and activities
- Language skills contextualized in relevant, inclusive, and culturally responsive content
- Ample opportunities for students to engage in communicative interaction

To ensure success with remote instruction, effective ESOL teachers maintain these best practices while making optimal and appropriate use of available technologies. They do not simply try to adapt an instructional plan for an in-person

class to a remote context; rather, they take a more intentional, deliberate approach to planning an online class. They select a digital tool based on the goal of instruction and choose the teaching strategies and activities necessary to reach that goal.

To ensure that their online classes are inclusive, effective ESOL teachers plan instruction that is not only relevant to learners, but also accessible. They teach digital skills to ensure that all learners can use the various tools employed in the virtual classroom environment. They include differentiation strategies to ensure that all students can access and fully engage in the online instruction.

To ensure that their online classes are rigorous, effective ESOL teachers continue to provide complex texts and engage learners in activities that promote critical thinking and develop their digital literacy. They plan rigorous tasks such as creating individual or group research projects, discerning the credibility of online sources, navigating a complicated website, and using multimedia tools to give a presentation. To promote independent learning, they use a combination of synchronous (facilitated) and asynchronous (student self-directed) sessions.

To ensure that their online classes are engaging and interactive, effective ESOL teachers plan the use of various digital tools that allow for student-student communication (e.g., breakout rooms in Zoom, shared documents in Google Drive). They assign pair or group projects through which students are expected to work together, either during a facilitated class session or separately scheduled, self-directed ones.

## Indicators of Knowledge and Sample Applications

**Standard 4:** The ESOL teacher designs coherent, rigorous instructional units and lessons that include measurable learning outcomes, optimize student interaction, support the needs of all learners, are guided by SLA principles, and aligned to the MA ELPS.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

1. A coherent curriculum aligned to the MA ELPS provides guidance, cohesion, and structure for the development of instructional plans.

2. A cohesive ESOL unit plan expands upon the units sketched out in a scope and sequence and includes measurable outcomes, evidence of learning, and a learning plan.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Through surveys, interviews, and other means, determine the specific needs, goals, cultures, identities, and circumstances of students in the program and center the curriculum on the results (i.e., not on a textbook series or teacher’s interests)
- Collaborate with other stakeholders in the program to contribute to the development of a coherent scope and sequence that increases in complexity and shows the development of language skills and content knowledge within each level and across all levels in the program
- Outline units in the scope and sequence that are relevant to learners and provide culturally responsive communicative contexts for developing language skills and content knowledge
- Align the class levels in the scope and sequence to the appropriate levels in the MA ELPS
- Integrate the MA ELPS into the scope and sequence, drawing from the language strands as well as the Civics and Navigating Systems strands, where appropriate
- Cross reference the program’s curriculum with the MA ELPS benchmarks to identify areas that may be over- or under-represented in instruction and adjust accordingly
- Develop rigorous unit plans that follow the program’s scope and sequence and include:
  - Language and content objectives that describe how and in what authentic context students will apply their new knowledge and language skills (e.g., “By the end of the unit, students will be able to . . . write a letter petitioning their child’s school to offer healthier meals”; “. . . independently navigate the enrollment process at the Massachusetts Health Connector website in order to apply for health insurance”)
  - Prioritized MA ELP standards and benchmarks aligned to the objectives

**Standard 4:** The ESOL teacher designs coherent, rigorous instructional units and lessons that include measurable learning outcomes, optimize student interaction, support the needs of all learners, are guided by SLA principles, and aligned to the MA ELPS.

#### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

##### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

3. Well-structured ESOL lesson plans are cohesive and include clear, measurable learning objectives aligned to priority MA ELPS benchmarks, meaningful assessments, and a well-paced sequence of activities.

#### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

##### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- A meaningful, authentic culminating task or project through which students demonstrate learning (e.g., “Students will demonstrate their learning . . . by role-playing a meeting with an employer”; “. . . by completing an online application for health insurance using the Massachusetts Health Connector”)
  - A sequence of lessons that progress toward the unit objectives and successful completion of the culminating task/project
  - A variety of learning experiences that challenge all learners and build essential skills (e.g., cooperative learning, discussions, self-directed work, group projects, publications, problem-solving)
  - A reasonable time frame for learners to reach the unit objectives
  - Ensure that each element in the unit plan aligns with the others: objectives, benchmarks, evidence of learning, activities, and resources (e.g., use the Backward Design approach to instructional planning)
- Develop cohesive lesson plans that make up a unit and include:
    - Clear language and content objectives that are concrete and measurable (e.g., “Students will . . . “write,” “present,” “describe”) and that avoid vague, unmeasurable terminology (e.g., “understand,” “learn about,” “become familiar with”)
    - Priority MA ELPS benchmarks aligned to the objectives (e.g., Students will write a response to a reading by first summarizing it and then agreeing or disagreeing with the author. W1C.6a. Write arguments to support claims with logical reasoning and sufficient, relevant, organized evidence)
    - A final measurable task or product, aligned to the lesson objectives, through which students demonstrate how well they have met the objectives
    - (e.g., “Students will demonstrate learning by writing an accurate summary of the author’s point of view, followed by an argument in support of or against it”)
    - Clear criteria for how learning will be measured and assessed (e.g., a rubric or checklist)

**Standard 4:** The ESOL teacher designs coherent, rigorous instructional units and lessons that include measurable learning outcomes, optimize student interaction, support the needs of all learners, are guided by SLA principles, and aligned to the MA ELPS.

#### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

##### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

4. Instructional plans that are inclusive, relevant, and culturally responsive promote learner engagement and motivation.

#### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

##### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Activities that maximize student interaction, minimize teacher-fronted instruction, and provide opportunities for students to engage in productive struggle
- A progression from more controlled practice to less controlled to more communicative language use in authentic contexts (e.g., students practice a conversation using a script, then progress to an unscripted role-play), including instruction in strategies that foster independent learning
- Formative assessments as ongoing check-ins on student progress (e.g., note where to stop the lesson and give learners a recall activity, a reflective-writing prompt, a short quiz)
- A variety of techniques, learning modalities, and engaging group activities (e.g., explicit instruction, discussion/debate, problem-solving, collaborative pair work, self-directed independent work, group projects)
- An appropriate number of activities for the time frame and level of the students
- Scaffolding and differentiation to meet diverse needs of students (e.g., visuals, sentence stems, graphic organizers)
- A closing activity that allows students an opportunity to reflect on their learning and self-assess
- Ensure that each element in the lesson plan aligns with the others: objectives, benchmarks, evidence of learning, activities, and resources (e.g., use the Backward Design approach to instructional planning)
- Plan instruction so that language development is contextualized in content that is meaningful and relevant to the learners
- Involve learners in the planning of lessons (e.g., goal setting, material selection, problem-posing)
- Plan activities that allow learners to engage critically with complex topics that are relevant to them (e.g., international current events, sociopolitical issues)
- Include materials that reflect the diversity of the learners as well as diverse viewpoints and perspectives

**Standard 4:** The ESOL teacher designs coherent, rigorous instructional units and lessons that include measurable learning outcomes, optimize student interaction, support the needs of all learners, are guided by SLA principles, and aligned to the MA ELPS.

#### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

##### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

5. Rigorous instructional plans support learners in developing their critical-thinking skills and academic and professional goals.

#### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

##### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Set learning objectives that go beyond “survival” English to ones that prepare learners for further education, careers, and civic engagement
- Include rigorous classroom tasks for academic and workplace preparation (e.g., conducting a group research project, preparing for a job interview, writing an accident report, analyzing and evaluating a resource)
- Include objectives and activities that develop learners’ critical-thinking skills (e.g., problem-solving, analyzing, and evaluating)
- Include complex print and digital texts (e.g., nonfiction articles, employee manuals, texts from various academic disciplines) and plan activities through which learners actively engage with the texts (e.g., citing evidence, summarizing the author’s point of view)
- Integrate the use of technology into instructional plans for in-person classes:
  - As learning objectives and demonstrations of learning (e.g., “Students will complete an online job application”; “. . . evaluate the veracity of Internet sources”; “. . . use publishing software”; “. . . prepare and give a multimedia class presentation”)
  - As part of instruction (e.g., formative assessments with Kahoot! or Quizlet; students co-editing through Google Docs or sharing their work through WhatsApp)
  - Through activities in which students use online tools and resources for authentic learning (e.g., finding information online, using publishing software to produce writing)
- Include MA ELPS benchmarks from Standard 5 to develop digital literacy skills and Standard 4 to develop learning strategies

**Standard 4:** The ESOL teacher designs coherent, rigorous instructional units and lessons that include measurable learning outcomes, optimize student interaction, support the needs of all learners, are guided by SLA principles, and aligned to the MA ELPS.

#### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

##### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

6. ESOL instructional plans are most effective when they include ample opportunities for students to practice the language through interaction, communication, and collaboration.

7. Planning for online classes involves intentional decisions about the use of digital tools and maintains best practices for ESOL instruction.

#### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

##### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Emphasize student-to-student interaction by planning several pair and small group activities and limiting teacher-centered instruction
- Include a clear purpose for the group or pair activities so that students have a reason to communicate and collaborate with each other
- Plan student groupings depending on the purpose of the activity or needs of the students (e.g., by proficiency levels, interests, or goals)
- Plan how to facilitate and monitor the groups to ensure that all learners are engaged (e.g., assign roles, provide scaffolds)
- Select the appropriate tools for the intended purpose (e.g., Zoom for face-to-face sessions, WhatsApp for communication, Google Drive for sharing work and materials, Blackboard for online discussions and resource repository, Quizlet for formative assessments)
- Plan to use a combination of synchronous (facilitated) and asynchronous (student self-directed) sessions in an online class
- Learn how to use specific features of digital tools (e.g., sharing the screen to present information; enabling students to share their screens; using breakout rooms for small group work; conducting polls to check for understanding)
- Prepare in advance for online class activities (e.g., selecting groups of students for breakout rooms; preparing documents for sharing; writing discussion board questions; designing the polls)
- Differentiate instruction to ensure that students at various language and digital literacy levels can all engage with the content and activities (e.g., prepare both hard copy and electronic versions of materials; provide job aids for specific tools; use screen shots and other visuals; offer “office hours” for individualized tutoring)
- If needed, add an entire lesson or unit to support students’ digital skill development



## Standard 5: Assessment

The ESOL teacher uses a variety of formative and summative assessments to inform and evaluate instruction, develop differentiated learning experiences, measure student learning, and promote learner metacognition.

### Supporting Explanation

Educational assessments provide critical information about learners' progress and areas in need of further development.

Assessments support learning in a variety of ways:

- Learners who understand their own progress and areas of need build self-efficacy and become more strategic about their learning.
- Teachers who consider varied assessment data know what to prioritize in their work with students.
- Program directors and other stakeholders who are informed by data are better able to support teachers and students and evaluate the effectiveness of their curriculum and instruction.

It is important that teachers involve learners in the assessment process by talking with them about why their progress is being measured, explaining test results, and providing opportunities to self-assess.

Effective adult ESOL teachers:

1. Design and administer a variety of formative and summative assessments in order to:
  - a) Identify students' learning needs and goals
  - b) Inform instruction and plan differentiated interventions
  - c) Determine and monitor students' progress toward achieving personal goals and state standards
2. Share assessment results with students to acknowledge progress and identify gaps
3. Share assessment conclusions with colleagues, as appropriate, and seek and apply their feedback about instructional and assessment practices that will support improved student learning

#### Guiding Questions

- *How does assessment data benefit adult ESOL learners, teachers, and programs?*
- *How can different types of assessments inform instructional decisions?*
- *What roles can students play in assessing their own learning and progress?*

#### Types of Assessment Effective ESOL Teachers Use

##### Student Needs Assessment

Information about students that informs curriculum and instructional decisions

##### Formative Assessment

Ongoing formal and informal evaluation of student performance

##### Summative Assessment

Measurement of student progress at the end of a learning cycle

##### Student Self-Assessment

Self-testing and self-reflection to promote independent learning

## Student Needs Assessment

What are the students' learning needs?

As part of the enrollment and placement process, programs should first conduct a student *needs assessment*. Needs assessments are assessments *for* learning and they provide information about students' backgrounds, goals, and educational needs. To gather this data, teachers and advisors typically use interviews and/or questionnaires that ask about students' formal education, time in the USA, work and family responsibilities, digital literacy level, reasons for taking English classes, and use of English outside of class. They then use this information to make appropriate instructional decisions and adjust the curriculum and teaching materials as needed.

Needs assessments for beginning English learners, especially those with limited first language literacy, require some adaptation (e.g., charts with check-off boxes, dot-voting, "four-corners" activities). These adaptations lower the literacy threshold necessary for meaningful participation and yield more accurate results.

Effective ESOL teachers also integrate a needs assessment into the first unit in a teaching cycle to elicit more about each student's cultural identity, life experience, work and home situation, and short- and long-term goals. This information helps teachers tailor instruction that is more relevant, accessible, and engaging to their students. The assessment activity itself can also help learners get to know one another and begin to build a class community. In addition, teachers conduct shorter, more targeted needs assessments at the start of each unit to identify students' priorities and prior knowledge about a topic. Teachers then modify the planned lesson content, teaching methods, and/or materials as needed (Center for Applied Linguistics 2007).

## Formative Assessment

What are the specific skills or concepts students need additional practice with?

How can teachers adjust lesson plans and/or delivery so that students can learn better?

The purpose of formative assessment is to inform instruction during class time and, like needs assessments, is considered assessment *for* learning. Formative assessments are diagnostic tools: ongoing evaluations that help the teacher determine the extent to which students are learning what is being taught, and then to target and modify instruction as needed. Such assessments also identify learners who are struggling and may need differentiated intervention. By adjusting their instructional plan, teachers accelerate students' learning and avoid falling into the pitfalls of "teaching to the middle."

Formative assessment requires intention, preparation, and attention. The teacher may check for comprehension during a reading or listening activity, call on students to answer questions in a review activity, or observe student performance during practice activities. This allows the teacher to make "real-time" instructional decisions based on how well students are demonstrating their communicative skills regarding a new concept or language function. The teacher picks up on cues: How engaged are the students? How confident are they with the material? How much more targeted practice might they need? These cues provide the teacher with many options for how to proceed.

Although informal observations of student performance can yield valuable insights, they may not provide enough information about the progress of students who tend to be quieter in classroom discussions or who are still working on internalizing a new skill or concept.

Therefore, effective ESOL teachers also use more formal and explicit methods, during and at the end of a class session, to carry out formative assessments (e.g., individual student work, brief demonstrations using new language, recall activities, homework) (Alvarez et al. 2014).

### Summative Assessment: Classroom-Based

How can teachers measure the extent to which learners have met the desired learning outcomes?

Does the assessment determine students' ability to transfer their learning to new, authentic situations?

Summative assessments measure student progress at the end of a learning cycle and are assessments *of* learning. Both formative and summative assessments may include tools such as quizzes, written assignments, and presentations, but the difference is in how the teacher uses the results. Whereas formative assessment informs instruction, summative assessment is primarily evaluative.

Summative assessment is a key component of the Backward Design approach, which the effective ESOL teacher uses to align evidence of student learning to the objectives of the lesson (Wiggins and McTighe 2012). For example, if a learning objective is to fill out a medical questionnaire, formative assessments might include a quiz on health vocabulary, but the summative assessment would be the completion of an actual medical form.

Summative assessments in ESOL include authentic demonstrations and applications of language learning. In addition to giving “tests,” effective ESOL teachers assess language skills in meaningful contexts such as giving directions to a local establishment, conducting a mock job or citizenship interview, writing a work accident report, or presenting a research project on a relevant topic. They involve students in identifying learning outcomes and provide options for the demonstration of learning, mindful of cultural differences (Montenegro and Jankowski 2017).

Ultimately, the goal of summative assessment in a communicative ESOL classroom is to demonstrate the extent to which students can apply the newly learned language and content in situations outside class. It also provides learners an opportunity to consolidate learning that has occurred through the course of a unit.

Effective ESOL teachers involve students in their learning and assessment. They explain the goals of a lesson or unit and involve students in describing what successful achievement looks like. Offering a choice of assessment formats (e.g., individual versus group project; recorded as opposed to live presentation) recognizes learner differences and validates diverse cultural backgrounds, learner strengths, and unique personal interests and goals. Students can also document their progress with work collected in portfolios. Together, teacher and students can create a checklist or a rubric defining the language skills and content knowledge needed to complete the target task and measure progress.

When students participate in the assessment process, it ensures transparency, enables learners to understand the rationale for the sequence of lessons and activities, and supports their ownership of learning.

### Summative Assessment: Standardized Tests

Are students ready for the next level?

How effective are the curriculum and instruction in the classroom/in the program?

Individual programs can use standardized tests to place students in the correct level, inform curriculum planning, and measure the development of language skills. However, while the principal purpose of standardized tests is to provide an objective means of measuring learner progress *across programs*, effective ESOL teachers help students see standardized assessments as an opportunity to receive feedback and improve their learning.

Programs regularly report results of standardized assessments to state and federal funders, who use the data to monitor and evaluate program effectiveness.

Programs also use standardized testing, along with reliable classroom assessments (including teacher observations and recommendations), to define criteria for the progression of students from one level to the next.

Effective ESOL teachers are familiar with the standardized tests used in their program, even if they are not responsible for administering them, so that they know what skills are being measured and how. They share test results with students, clearly explaining what the scores mean and how the information relates to their continued learning.

While standardized assessments are limited in offering specific information (i.e., students and teachers cannot review particular items without compromising test security), students recognize the high-stakes nature of the exams and often want feedback on their performance.

Because testing may cause anxiety in some students, effective teachers frame assessment primarily as a valuable source of information. They also use frequent low-stakes assessments as an effective strategy to reduce students' text anxiety (Agarwal et al. 2014).

### Student Self-Assessment

How can students monitor their own progress and become more independent, self-directed learners?

Student self-assessment is an essential learning tool; it is assessment *as* learning. The two most common forms of self-assessment are **self-testing** and **self-reflection**.

Self-testing can be as simple as:

- The teacher prompting students to put away their notes and recall what they have learned
- Students elaborating on what they have learned by providing an example
- Students explaining what they learned to a classmate who was recently absent

Research in cognitive science has determined that frequent no-stakes or low-stakes self-testing of current and previous learning is highly effective in consolidating learning, improving memory, and enhancing students' ability to transfer their learning to new situations (Brown et al. 2014). Self-tests also get students to acknowledge not only what they have learned but also what they have yet to learn, informing their next steps for study (Son et al. 2020).

Self-reflection activities also encourage self-direction in learning. At the beginning of the learning cycle, the teacher asks students to think about and articulate what they want to learn. They then use these learning objectives as a baseline for measuring their own progress (e.g., a KWL chart: What I **K**now/What I **W**ant to Know/What I **L**earned).

At the end of a lesson, students recap what they learned and what they need to practice more. Self-assessment options vary with language proficiency levels; simple logs, checklists, or multiple-choice formats are accessible for lower-level students, while more advanced students can write details or participate in discussion groups to describe their learning progress. Individual conferences also offer students an excellent opportunity to express themselves about their learning and get guidance from the teacher. When students develop the habit of reflecting on their own learning, they strengthen their metacognitive skills, which better positions them for lifelong learning.

## Indicators of Knowledge and Sample Applications

**Standard 5:** The ESOL teacher uses a variety of formative and summative assessments to inform and evaluate instruction, develop differentiated learning experiences, measure student learning, and promote learner metacognition.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

1. Assessments are designed to identify learning needs, inform instruction, and monitor students' progress.
2. Needs assessments are designed to identify students' learning needs, goals, and background circumstances, which may influence learning.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Design assessments that are purposeful and simulate real-life tasks
  - Align assessments to learning objectives (i.e., ensure that assessment tools measure the language skill or content they are intended to measure)
  - Align classroom activities to learning objectives and assessments (i.e., ensure that students are taught what they are being assessed on)
  - Use the benchmarks in the MA ELPS to guide the development and implementation of level-appropriate assessments
  - When assessing students with limited literacy skills, revise the assessment tool to measure only the intended target (e.g., use pictures when assessing listening comprehension, and elicit oral or physical responses rather than relying only on reading and writing skills)
  - Analyze results from a variety of assessments to measure student learning, inform instruction, and determine differentiated interventions
- Use level appropriate needs assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of the instructional cycle to identify and reevaluate students' learning needs and goals
  - Encourage students to identify their own learning needs and goals (e.g., by incorporating "can-do" checklists, language-use inventories, timelines)
  - Use knowledge of student characteristics and needs to identify struggling learners and modify instruction or design interventions

**Standard 5:** The ESOL teacher uses a variety of formative and summative assessments to inform and evaluate instruction, develop differentiated learning experiences, measure student learning, and promote learner metacognition.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

3. Formative assessments provide feedback to teachers and students about the extent of ongoing learning and to inform instructional decisions.
4. Classroom-based summative assessments measure student learning and progress at the end of a unit or learning cycle.
5. Standardized assessments objectively track the development of students' language skills at the beginning and end of a learning cycle, support students' learning, and serve accountability purposes.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Use formative assessments regularly during the lesson to check for understanding (e.g., KWL charts, Think-Pair-Share, role plays, entry/exit tickets, Total Physical Response activities, targeted teacher observations)
- Use multiple assessment tools and strategies to determine the depth of student learning (e.g., fill-in-the-blank vs. original language production, oral vs. written work)
- Identify students who are struggling as well as those ready for greater challenges and plan further differentiated instruction
- Modify instruction based on feedback from formative assessments (e.g., break down the learning goals into smaller steps, strategically group students, model the targeted language use, provide additional examples, use visuals, identify common errors, provide opportunities for additional practice)
- When designing a unit, use Backward Design to define the final learning outcomes and determine how they will be measured
- Use summative assessments that are project-, problem-, product- or performance-based to allow students to apply the knowledge learned in class to real-world situations (e.g., completing a digital task, role-playing a doctor's visit, debating a relevant social issue, writing a résumé, filling out a form)
- Use assessment tools with clear criteria that reliably measure how learning will be assessed (e.g., rubric, checklist, written test)
- If administering standardized assessments, obtain training and certification, and follow ACLS assessment policies and test publisher guidelines to ensure reliable results
- Participate in a program-wide process for tracking and documenting learning gains for each student using pre- and post-tests
- Explore the program's approved standardized assessment tools to understand their structure and content
- Provide instruction on the skills that are being tested in required ESOL assessments
- Teach general test-taking skills and strategies (e.g., selecting digital radio buttons, best-guessing in multiple choice)
- Use standardized assessment data to inform criteria for progression of students from one level to the next

**Standard 5:** The ESOL teacher uses a variety of formative and summative assessments to inform and evaluate instruction, develop differentiated learning experiences, measure student learning, and promote learner metacognition.

**INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE**

*What Effective ESOL Teachers Know*

6. Students benefit from self-assessment.

**SAMPLE APPLICATIONS**

*What Effective ESOL Teachers Do*

- Give students frequent opportunities to self-test and reflect on their learning
- Share assessment results with students to acknowledge progress, identify gaps, and determine next steps
- Help students reset their learning goals and strategies based on feedback from assessments
- Use language that is meaningful and understandable when explaining the role/ importance of assessments and test results
- Involve and guide students in the creation and use of classroom assessment tools (e.g., rubrics, test questions and format, peer-editing criteria, portfolios, KWL charts, checklists)
- Provide opportunities for students to give feedback on assessments
- Regularly acknowledge learner success through visual displays and/or celebrations

## Standard 6: Instructional Delivery

The ESOL teacher facilitates language learning by using a variety of rigorous instructional methods and relevant materials that optimize student engagement, encourage productive struggle, foster critical thinking, and address diverse needs, interests, and levels of readiness.

### Supporting Explanation

The previous standards in this document discuss all the elements of effective adult ESOL instruction: the principles of second language acquisition, the components of language, cultural responsiveness, thoughtful planning, and assessment.

Standard 6 describes what all of these elements look like in action in the adult ESOL classroom (both remote and in-person). Effective instructional delivery is grounded in SLA principles, aligned to the MA ELPS, inclusive of all learners, and keeps at its core high expectations for all students. It is based on a well-structured lesson plan with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

#### Guiding Questions

- *How can I make my instruction relevant to and inclusive of all learners?*
- *How do I create an engaging environment for all learners?*
- *How do I help students become independent learners?*

An effective ESOL class emphasizes interaction and communication among learners. More student-to-student interaction (as opposed to teacher-to-student interaction) creates opportunities for students to use the language independently of the teacher. In an effective ESOL class, learners engage in tasks that require more than textbook language and scripted interactions. Instead, activities use authentic English in meaningful contexts that reflect students' diverse interests, needs, goals, and cultures, and foster their critical thinking. The teacher's role in the adult ESOL classroom is to facilitate an environment where language learning thrives and to provide instruction, guidance, and support that promote language acquisition and language learning that prepares students for 21<sup>st</sup> century workplaces, classrooms, and communities.

Effective ESOL teachers ensure that instructional delivery:

1. Is **relevant** and **inclusive**
2. **Contextualizes** language learning in **rigorous** content that promotes **critical thinking**
3. Includes **engaging** activities that promote student **interaction, communication, and collaboration**

Effective ESOL teachers take concrete steps to ensure that these elements are present in the adult ESOL classroom (in online and/or in-person instructional settings). These practices are supported by research and aligned to WIOA mandates and the TSTM framework, as seen in the chart on the next page.



## Effective ESOL Instructional Delivery at-a-Glance

	Key Elements of Effective Instructional Delivery	Impact on Students	Supporting Research	Connections to WIOA and TSTM
1.	<p>Instruction is <b>relevant</b> and <b>inclusive</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content is culturally responsive.</li> <li>• Language is contextualized in authentic content.</li> </ul>	<p>Students are supported and comfortable taking risks in an emotionally safe environment.</p> <p>Students make connections between learning activities/objectives, their interests and goals, prior knowledge, and real-world, culturally relevant contexts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affective filter</li> <li>• Motivational framework</li> <li>• Comprehensible input</li> <li>• Culturally responsive and sustaining teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce preparation</li> <li>• Civics education</li> <li>• Health literacy</li> <li>• Financial literacy</li> <li>• Digital literacy</li> <li>• Family literacy</li> <li>• Respecting differences and diversity</li> <li>• Navigating systems</li> <li>• Adaptability and willingness to learn</li> </ul>
2.	<p>Instruction is <b>rigorous</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content and tasks foster critical thinking.</li> <li>• Content is academically accessible to all learners.</li> <li>• Responsibility is gradually released.</li> <li>• Assessment is regularly conducted and results clearly communicated.</li> </ul>	<p>Students do the majority of the cognitive lifting and develop their content knowledge concurrently with their language skills.</p> <p>Students struggle productively, demonstrate application of learning, and monitor their own progress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BICS and CALP</li> <li>• i + 1</li> <li>• Authentic communication</li> <li>• Affective filter</li> <li>• Motivational framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem-solving</li> <li>• Critical thinking</li> <li>• Processing and analyzing information</li> </ul>
3.	<p>Instruction is <b>engaging</b> and <b>interactive</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative and communicative learning opportunities are provided.</li> <li>• Teacher talk is limited and modified.</li> <li>• Corrective feedback is provided judiciously.</li> </ul>	<p>Students are equitably and actively engaged in a variety of learning modalities 100 percent of the time.</p> <p>Students are collaborating and negotiating meaning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquisition vs. learning</li> <li>• Comprehensible output</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpersonal skills</li> <li>• Communication and self-awareness</li> </ul>

## Key Elements of Effective Adult ESOL Instructional Delivery

### Relevant and Inclusive Instruction

#### Building a Culturally Inclusive Community of Learners

Perhaps the most important responsibility of an ESOL teacher is to create and cultivate a learning community that is inclusive and affirming of all learners. An inclusive community lowers students' affective filter, allowing them to feel comfortable speaking in class, making mistakes, voicing opinions, and advocating for themselves. These practices, in turn, promote not only student language development, but also student ownership of their learning both inside and outside of class. Effective teachers take steps to create an inclusive learning community by getting to know the students as individuals and learning about their previous academic experiences, short and long term goals, communities, and cultures; including elements of students' lives in the class materials; providing ample opportunities for students to have a choice and a voice in the class activities; and showing respect to all learners.

#### Teaching Language Skills Within Meaningful, Authentic, Real-World Contexts

Learners are generally more engaged in lessons when they are learning something that has meaning and purpose. Effective teachers engage adult English learners by providing classroom materials and activities that reflect their realities and contextualizing their language learning in meaningful content similar to what they encounter outside the ESOL classroom (e.g., in work, healthcare, educational, and community settings).

### Rigorous Instruction

#### Teaching Rigorous Content that Requires Students to Think Critically

Effective ESOL teachers further contextualize language instruction and engage learners by providing them with rigorous content and tasks that challenge them to use and strengthen their critical-thinking skills. For example, teachers can ask students to come up with possible solutions to a problem in their community or formulate an argument for a debate. They guide and support learners through these tasks by teaching the academic vocabulary and language for communicating complex ideas as well as strategies for accessing complex texts.

Effective teachers also include complex informational texts (including digital multimedia texts) through which learners increase their content knowledge and critical-reading skills. It is essential that learners read these kinds of texts because most of the texts they encounter in the workplace, college, and civic life are nonfiction and informational. The ability to read critically (e.g., cite evidence from the text, analyze and evaluate content) is an expected skill in all these contexts.

Beginning English learners obviously need much support when working on these kinds of activities, but it is important that teachers provide rigorous instruction even for learners at this level. Effective teachers support them by providing scaffolding tools such as graphic organizers, sentence stems, and pictorial texts that allow the learners to access and participate in rigorous classroom tasks. They can also modify the task itself to make it more accessible to beginners. For example, they can set up a rigorous multistep research project by: writing out a single question, with a script that students can use to survey classmates; preparing a chart where students can insert their collected data; and providing the language (e.g., vocabulary, sentence stems) students can use to talk or write about the results of their research.



**WIOA connection**  
Rigorous instruction  
Postsecondary  
education/training

Effective ESOL teachers also make good use of the MA ELPS, which were designed to provide guidance on the integration of college and career readiness into language instruction—at *all* levels. The standards include benchmarks across the language skills areas for learners at the Beginning Literacy NRS Level 1 up to Advanced NRS Level 6. Many of the benchmarks at the lower levels include examples of scaffolding techniques, such as those mentioned above, that teachers can use to set all learners up for success.

### Making Instruction Academically Accessible to All Learners

A typical adult ESOL class includes learners with various levels of proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, as well as diverse educational backgrounds, cultures, goals, interests, and learning preferences. Effective ESOL teachers address this variability and design instruction that is inclusive of all learners. One way is to identify goals and needs shared among learners and provide lessons that allow the whole class to benefit.

Another way is to differentiate instruction. With differentiated instruction, students are not doing more work or less work than their classmates; rather, they are learning comparable content in different ways and at different levels. Effective teachers provide alternative ways for learners to understand the instruction, access materials, and demonstrate attainment of the lesson’s objectives (Tomlinson 2017). Much of differentiated instruction is planned beforehand and can include: multileveled reading materials or visual/auditory supports; learning stations with a range of activities; options for final projects (e.g., recording a presentation or presenting it live in front of the class).

Effective ESOL teachers avoid teaching to the middle and differentiate instruction based on students’ needs.

### Gradually Releasing Responsibility

The effective ESOL class generally begins with the teacher providing modeling and scaffolding, then moving gradually toward giving the students greater responsibility for their learning. The gradual release of responsibility allows learners to master rigorous content and gain skills and confidence as they become more independent users of the language. The teacher monitors the learners’ development and moves on to the next step in the lesson when they have demonstrated their readiness.

In an effective ESOL lesson, **activating students’ prior knowledge** is the first step. All students bring some knowledge, questions, or experience on which new learning can be built. Effective teachers activate this awareness by using simple techniques: prompting students to talk about a picture; asking them what they already know about a topic or where they’ve heard certain language; brainstorming ideas related to the lesson. By activating students’ prior knowledge, the teacher creates a context and foundation for memorable new learning (Brown et al 2014).

Next, the teacher **introduces** the new, targeted language of the lesson. Depending on the instructional objectives, available time, and learners’ metalinguistic abilities, teachers either may present and model the targeted language or begin by having the learners figure out the language patterns for themselves. In either approach, the teacher contextualizes the language in meaningful content, usually through a warm-up activity. At some point during the introduction, the teacher shares the learning objectives, so students know the focus and purpose of the lesson.

After introducing the new information, the teacher checks that learners are ready for **controlled practice** activities. During this stage, teachers might ask students to listen and repeat the target structure, complete sentences with the correct target structure or information, or identify the target structure or information in a dialogue or close reading. Because the purpose of controlled practice is the students’ accurate use of

the target language, teachers often ask “display questions” (e.g., “What is the title of the article?”). During this stage, teachers are attentive to student errors and provide immediate and specific corrective feedback. Teachers also conduct formative assessments to verify that students are able to move on to less controlled activities.

In **semi-controlled practice**, students use the targeted language with greater flexibility and independence. During this stage, students often work together in pairs or small groups that provide more opportunities for them to speak and listen and to learn collaboratively. They practice using the targeted language in activities that focus more on meaning than on specific forms, allowing them greater choice in how to use the language. For example, students can use the targeted language to practice asking and answering questions; share information to fill in an information gap; complete sentence stems; or role-play with an incomplete script. Teachers generally observe the students in action, providing support and corrective feedback as needed, and using formative assessments (e.g., checklists, short quizzes) to inform instruction and identify when it is time to move on.

Students take on even greater responsibility for their learning through **authentic communicative and application activities**. These activities provide opportunities for students to not just practice the language, but to use it to express and elaborate on original ideas, synthesize information, generate original language, develop fluency, and solidify their understanding. The language produced by students during this part of a lesson is not totally predictable and there are ample opportunities for them to make mistakes as they try to express themselves. Examples of authentic communicative activities include students cooperatively solving a problem, acting out roles and situations based on real-life experiences, and gathering and presenting information in surveys inside and outside class. The teacher’s role is to arrange and facilitate these activities, providing guidance and support as needed (e.g., prompting next steps, helping with communication breakdowns), and encouraging learners to extend their language by asking “referential questions,” i.e., questions to which there is more than one correct answer and which invite original speech (e.g., What did you learn from your survey? What would you do in this situation?). To help develop fluency, effective teachers generally avoid interrupting students in the middle of these activities to correct errors. Instead, they note recurring errors to revisit at another time, either at the end of the activity or in a later class.

Effective teachers further cultivate learner independence by providing time at the end of a lesson for students to **reflect** on their learning, revisit the lesson objectives, and assess their own process and progress.

The gradual release of responsibility is not always a linear process, but one that involves varied and progressive student practice and progress. For example, effective teachers remember that acquiring new language requires multiple, various encounters to move from simply recognizing a word when cued to being able to generate the word in a new context.

### Gradual Release of Responsibility



## Assessing Regularly and Making Progress Visible to Students

Effective teachers conduct **formative assessments** at every step in a lesson to ensure that students are mastering rigorous content and are ready to move on to the next step. To conduct informal, on-the-spot assessments, teachers use observations and quick comprehension checks (e.g., red/yellow/green cards to indicate stop/slow down/keep going; “fist-to-five fingers” to indicate level of understanding). Teachers also conduct planned formative assessments such as short oral, written, or digital quizzes; observation checklists; and, student self-assessments. The teacher uses the information gained from these formative assessments to modify the lesson for the class as a whole or for individuals. As formative assessments become an expected part of the class routine, learners become more aware of their own learning, get better at checking for their own understanding, and advocate for themselves by asking questions and seeking clarification.

Effective teachers check for understanding and avoid asking yes/no questions directed at the whole class (e.g., “Does everyone understand?”). These types of questions usually do not result in meaningful feedback. They take the time to listen to the individual responses, differentiating the lesson if necessary. Teachers can also ask students to explain or paraphrase what they have understood. For example, after giving directions for an activity, a teacher can ask learners, “What will you do first?” and “What will you do next?” The responses not only provide information about how well the students understood the directions and whether or not they are ready to begin the activity, but also provide another opportunity for the students, not the teacher, to speak.

Effective teachers build in time at the close of each lesson for students to reflect on their learning and to self-assess their progress. They also conduct **summative assessments** at the end of a unit to ascertain the extent to which learners have met the unit-level objectives. The summative assessment is based on a demonstration of learning, such as a role play, piece of writing, or final project. While primarily evaluative, summative assessments also identify areas that may still need review or more practice in future lessons.

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. It gives both the teacher and the students information about learner progress. Assessments help answer the questions: Is the student “getting it”? Is the instruction effective? Is the student meeting the objectives of the lesson? Can the teacher or student be doing something different to be more effective?

## Engaging and Interactive Instruction

### Providing Communicative, Collaborative Learning Opportunities

Effective teachers know that language is acquired through communication and, therefore, create opportunities for students to engage in meaningful, communicative interaction. They also know that the ability to collaborate is an expectation in the workplace, in higher education, and in civic life, so they include group/pair activities through which students negotiate meaning, navigate various types of discourse, and develop interpersonal and self-awareness skills.

They design activities to be student-centered and student-driven. In physical classrooms, this includes arranging chairs so that the students are facing each other; in virtual classrooms, it includes the use of breakout rooms. In both settings, effective teachers:

- Are strategic about the groupings depending on students' levels and needs, and the goals of the activity.
- Are intentional and deliberate about the kinds of activities for group work. To maximize language interaction among learners, effective teachers design tasks that have a purpose and an authentic need or reason for students to collaborate.
- Monitor the discussions and hold students accountable. To ensure that all students are participating and engaged in the group work, effective teachers use accountable talk strategies (e.g., assign specific roles to each student in the group; place prompts around the classroom as reminders to use appropriate forms of discussion; model questioning, probing, asking for clarification, challenging misconceptions) to stimulate students' higher-order thinking skills, reflect on their learning, and communicate their knowledge and understanding.

### Limiting and Modifying Teacher Talk

Effective ESOL teachers know that there is an inverse correlation between teacher talk and student engagement, and that student talk is essential to both language learning and creating a student-centered class (Hattie 2012). The common communication pattern—the teacher asks a question, a student responds, the teacher evaluates the student's response—limits student-to-student communication and increases teacher talk time. Because students are in class for a limited amount of time, effective teachers create activities that optimize opportunities for the students to do most of the talking, not the teacher.

Effective teachers use a variety of strategies and techniques to monitor and limit the amount of their teacher talk. They invite students to paraphrase instructions. They ask open-ended questions and encourage students to answer their classmates' questions. They use wait time, allowing a few seconds for a student to speak before jumping in to fill what is sometimes an awkward silence. By waiting, the teacher allows students (especially beginners) time to think, formulate answers, negotiate meaning, and process language.

When they do speak, effective teachers are intentional about enhancing student comprehension. They adjust their language to the level of the students, enunciating clearly and using familiar vocabulary and grammatical structures. They use gestures and body language to help demonstrate meaning, speak with natural English pronunciation, and avoid oversimplifying.

### Providing Corrective Feedback Judiciously

Teacher-talk in an ESOL class must also include corrective feedback that does not excessively interrupt students' communication. Corrective feedback can be:

- Explicit ("The correct way to say that is . . .")
- Implicit (recasting the language to model the correct form: student says "I go yesterday" and teacher says "You went yesterday?")
- Metalinguistic ("Do you remember the past tense of that verb . . .")

Effective corrective feedback is specific, focused on the task rather than the student, and directed toward improvement rather than verifying student performance (Deans for Impact 2015). Instead of repeatedly saying "Good job!" the effective teacher offers feedback like "Sorry, I'm confused. Are you talking about yesterday or today?" and then waits for the student to produce the correct form.

## Indicators of Knowledge and Sample Applications

**Standard 6:** The ESOL teacher facilitates language learning by using a variety of rigorous instructional methods and relevant materials that optimize student engagement, encourage productive struggle, foster critical thinking, and address diverse needs, interests, and levels of readiness.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

1. Building an inclusive community of learners creates an emotionally safe class environment and encourages students to own their learning.

2. Language acquisition is more engaging and enduring when it is contextualized in content relevant to students

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- In collaboration with students, establish community guidelines for both in-person and virtual classes (e.g., showing respect for one another, turn-taking, acceptable arrival and departure times, appropriate use of phones)
- Guide and support students in creating a class project (e.g., collection of student writing; class Facebook page or WhatsApp group; student newsletter/advice column/skill share)
- Adhere to a predictable routine and rhythm to the class so that students know what to expect and what is expected of them (e.g., provide a “week-at-a-glance” schedule; begin and end the class with warm-up and reflection activities)
- Regularly elicit feedback from students on their evolving needs and the choices of lesson topics, instructional activities, materials, and class management practices
- Respond respectfully and effectively to learners’ questions (e.g., answer immediately or put in “parking lot” to address later; reply to online posts in a timely manner)
- Teach language skills in contexts relevant to students’ lives (e.g., workforce preparation, community, health/financial/digital/family literacy, civics education)
- Provide opportunities for students to transfer what they learn to various contexts inside and outside class
- Use authentic materials and complex, non-fiction texts (e.g., workplace handbook, news report, academic text, citizenship test, children’s school report card)
- Use the MA ELP Standards and benchmarks to guide instruction in language skills, civics, and navigating systems
- Provide activities through which students practice phrases, vocabulary, and discourse patterns expected in a particular context (e.g., job interview, health history forms, formal vs. informal greetings)
- Include goal setting as part of instruction and allow students time to reflect on their language needs and progress

**Standard 6:** The ESOL teacher facilitates language learning by using a variety of rigorous instructional methods and relevant materials that optimize student engagement, encourage productive struggle, foster critical thinking, and address diverse needs, interests, and levels of readiness.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

3. To prepare adult learners for 21<sup>st</sup> century work, education, and civic engagement, language instruction must include rigorous content and activities that foster critical thinking.
4. Differentiating instruction, while maintaining the same learning objectives and high expectations for all learners, allows students to access the content, materials, and activities of a rigorous ESOL lesson.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Provide explicit and intentional instruction in understanding and using academic and professional language (e.g., vocabulary, phrases, and discourse)
- Teach strategies for accessing complex written and oral texts (e.g., using context clues, drawing on prior knowledge, summarizing)
- Promote critical-thinking skills such as analyzing, categorizing, summarizing, evaluating, interpreting, and problem-solving in class activities and tasks (e.g., have students conduct research by gathering information, then synthesizing, analyzing, and reporting results)
- Integrate digital and media literacy skills into teaching and learning. For example, have students:
  - Find information in an online scavenger hunt
  - Navigate a learning management system
  - Use publishing software
  - Work on a group project with digital sharing tools
- Have learners periodically revisit their' goals and action plans throughout a learning cycle
- Modify or scaffold materials and activities for those learners who need additional support (e.g., sentences stems, graphic organizers, visual supports, a script provided for a speaking and listening activity, closed captioning for online videos)
- Include various modalities in instruction (e.g., reading, writing, speaking, listening, manipulatives, digital tools, realia, visuals).
- Organize student groupings (e.g., mixed or same level, age, gender, country of origin) according to student interest, level, or lesson purpose.
- Set up and facilitate learning stations for focused skill practice (e.g., vocabulary word games, predicting a text's content from context clues, website scavenger hunt, listening station with headphones, library with reader response forms)
- Provide students with choices and opportunities to make decisions in the course of instruction
- Provide students with options to demonstrate their learning (e.g., give or record a presentation, develop a timeline, write a review, create and act out a role play)
- Use communication tools to correspond with students individually (e.g., text, email)



**Standard 6:** The ESOL teacher facilitates language learning by using a variety of rigorous instructional methods and relevant materials that optimize student engagement, encourage productive struggle, foster critical thinking, and address diverse needs, interests, and levels of readiness.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

5. Gradually releasing responsibility supports students in becoming proficient, independent learners.

6. Conducting assessments regularly and making progress visible to students informs instruction and motivates learners.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Post learning objectives in student-friendly language so that students understand the purpose of the lesson
- Begin lessons with a warm-up activity to engage learners and activate or build background knowledge
- Progressively transition class activities from controlled to semi-controlled practice, and ultimately to independent, communicative use (e.g., start with reading a scripted scenario/ progress to an original role play, acting out a real-life situation)
- Give clear instructions for forthcoming activities, modeling as needed
- Check for understanding by asking students to paraphrase and/or demonstrate learning before moving on
- Pre-teach vocabulary when needed and encourage students to use new vocabulary throughout the lesson
- Use display questions to elicit “correct” answers at the beginning of a lesson, and more referential questions (e.g., open-ended questions that encourage personal expression and elaboration) as the lesson progresses
- Follow up synchronous lessons with self-directed asynchronous activities for learners to participate in independently
- Provide opportunities for students to use the language learning strategies in the MA ELPS Standard 4 in all language skill areas
- Conduct formative assessments (e.g., observing student participation, asking students to explain or paraphrase what they understand) throughout the lesson to determine if learners are prepared to move to the next activity, and adjust the lesson as needed
- Assist students in monitoring their own progress and challenges both inside and outside the classroom (e.g., providing learning logs in which students record their attendance, time spent studying, successes using new language)
- Revisit learning objectives at the end of a lesson and allow time for students to reflect on and write about their learning
- Conduct a summative assessment at the end of a unit
- Involve students in the creation of rubrics or checklists with clear criteria for measuring success

**Standard 6:** The ESOL teacher facilitates language learning by using a variety of rigorous instructional methods and relevant materials that optimize student engagement, encourage productive struggle, foster critical thinking, and address diverse needs, interests, and levels of readiness.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 7. Communicative interaction accelerates language acquisition and develops necessary collaboration skills.     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask students to keep portfolios of their writing, recorded speech, and/or video segments as a way for both teacher and learners to see student progress</li><li>• Share and discuss assessment results with students</li><li>• Acknowledge students' success (e.g., through visual displays, presentations, class chats)</li></ul>   |
| 8. Limiting and modifying teacher talk allows for increased student talk and accelerates language acquisition. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emphasize student-student interaction over teacher-student</li><li>• Assign and facilitate group projects through which students communicate, collaborate and present together (e.g., information-gap activities, jigsaw readings, research, a class newsletter or social media page)</li><li>• Integrate problem-based learning by inviting students to identify a community or social problem they would like to work on, and support groups of students in solving the problem (e.g., workplace safety, immigrant rights and responsibilities, paying for college)</li><li>• Teach strategies for collaboration, including those from the MA ELPS (e.g., paraphrasing what the previous speaker said, peer-editing, group brainstorming, collective goal setting)</li><li>• Assign and rotate roles for students (e.g., scribe, time manager, task manager, participation monitor, reporter) in group work</li><li>• Have groups self-assess their process and outcomes</li></ul> |

**Standard 6:** The ESOL teacher facilitates language learning by using a variety of rigorous instructional methods and relevant materials that optimize student engagement, encourage productive struggle, foster critical thinking, and address diverse needs, interests, and levels of readiness.

#### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

##### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

9. Providing corrective feedback judiciously allows students to improve accuracy while also focusing on oral fluency.

#### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

##### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Use gestures and visual supports to enhance learner comprehension (e.g., point to a picture, mime an action, exaggerate mouth movements when modeling pronunciation)
- Use digital tools to reinforce instructions (e.g., text messages, social media, screen shots)
- Correct only those errors that are the focus of the lesson or when the purpose of the activity is accuracy
- Give students opportunities to self-correct (e.g., use appropriate wait time; convey misunderstanding but do not correct; provide reference resources for students)
- Provide opportunities and guidance for students to peer-correct (e.g., reviewing one another's writing; completing rubrics on oral presentations)
- Address repeated errors after communicative activities are completed through a mini lesson that targets the error
- Use a variety of error correction techniques (i.e., explicit, implicit, and metalinguistic) depending on learners' needs, preferences, and sensitivity about error correction

## Standard 7: Professional Growth

The ESOL teacher engages in a continuous improvement process that includes ongoing reflection, self-assessment, goal setting, and high-quality professional development in order to gain greater teaching expertise, refine instructional practices, increase learner engagement, and improve student outcomes.

### Supporting Explanation

ESOL teachers play a key role in helping students develop the language skills needed to meet their educational, career, and personal goals. Effective teachers take this role seriously and pursue ways to grow professionally in order to improve student learning and outcomes.

Effective ESOL teachers:

1. Reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching practice and collaborate with colleagues and the program director
2. Analyze student data and share responsibility for student learning
3. Set professional development goals and develop a PD plan
4. Actively pursue high-quality PD offerings
5. Integrate new learning into practice, assess the impact of PD on instruction, and plan next steps for continuous improvement

#### Guiding Questions

- *What can I do to enhance student learning?*
- *How do I know if my professional learning is having a positive impact on my students?*
- *How does a reflective practice strengthen my teaching?*

Teachers come to the field of adult ESOL from a range of backgrounds. Some have taught in the K–12 system and have knowledge of applied linguistics and experience writing lesson plans but may be unfamiliar with teaching adults. Others come into the field with a great deal of experience working in adult education but perhaps little experience teaching ESOL. Still others may have taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL) overseas but are new to working with immigrant learners or refugees. Additionally, part-time teachers and those in workplace education settings may lack opportunities for the collegial exchange that contributes to professional growth.

“Effective professional development results in changes to teacher knowledge and practices, and improvements in student learning outcomes.”

(Learning Policy Institute 2017)

Regardless of their background or teaching context, ESOL professionals need to stay current with the continually emerging research in second language acquisition, changes in public policy that affect learners, funding requirements, and their program’s goals for continuous improvement. Furthermore, effective teachers recognize the value of culturally responsive and sustaining teaching and the need to deepen their own intercultural and critical self-awareness skills. It is important, therefore, that individual teachers recognize the areas in which they could benefit from additional professional development and seek out opportunities that address their needs.



### Cultivating a Reflective Practice

Reflective practitioners approach their practice with a growth mindset for themselves and for their students. They embrace the challenge of continuous improvement by regularly assessing and updating their teaching skills and subject-matter knowledge, and they work on improving their classroom practice with the ultimate goal of improving student learning.

As part of the reflective process, effective teachers seek input from several sources. This input comes first and foremost from the students themselves: Are they attending class regularly? Are they engaged? Are they progressing? During and after lessons, reflective teachers note areas where they and their students were successful and areas where they struggled. They may periodically survey students, seeking specific feedback about ways to support their learning.

Effective teachers also engage in exchanges with colleagues about teaching strategies and observe one another's classes, giving and receiving feedback. They contribute relevant ideas and expertise to planning and decision-making either at the program or class level (e.g., implementing standards-based, culturally responsive curriculum and instruction, examining student work, analyzing student performance)



### Analyzing Student and Program Data

A reflective practice also includes analysis of student data. Data on student progress is useful to assess the effectiveness of teaching, as it shows the extent to which students are learning, as well as the alignment of the curriculum to assessments. If the data show that a number of learners are not progressing, effective teachers look closely at the specific language skill areas where this is occurring (e.g., reading, writing,

speaking, listening), the student levels (e.g., beginner, intermediate, advanced), and the individual students. Teachers then use this information to determine what skills they want to strengthen.

Similarly, data on attendance can provide useful information about student engagement and the effectiveness of the instruction. There can be multiple explanations for poor attendance. Some are outside the teacher's purview (e.g., an inconvenient class schedule, childcare and/or transportation issues, outdated curriculum). However, some are within a teacher's purview (e.g., a classroom environment that is unengaging, not inclusive, or unsupportive), and attendance records can alert the teacher about an issue that needs addressing. Reflective teachers with a growth mindset consider whether they can address the issue by improving their own instructional planning and delivery, and they seek professional development as needed.

### Research into Practice

Teachers who are self-reflective:

- Are more insightful about their practice
- Have heightened sensitivity to their students' engagement and understanding
- Have increased awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses, becoming more effective professionals
- Are better able to integrate new knowledge and information into their practice



### Setting PD Goals and Developing a PD Plan

Through a combination of reflective self-assessment and analysis of student and program data, teachers identify their PD needs and focus.

Individually, or in collaboration with a coach, supervisor, or program director, effective teachers set goals that are not only:

- Specific and strategic
- Measurable
- Action-oriented
- Rigorous, realistic, results-focused
- Timed and tracked

but also

- Inclusive
- Equitable

By intentionally centering inclusivity and equity, effective teachers ensure their goals bring traditionally marginalized people into processes and decision-making and include an element of fairness or justice that seeks to address systemic inequity (The Management Center, 2020).

<b>S</b>	Specific and Strategic
<b>M</b>	Measurable
<b>A</b>	Action-oriented
<b>R</b>	Rigorous, Realistic, Results-focused
<b>T</b>	Timed and Tracked
<b>I</b>	Inclusive
<b>E</b>	Equitable

Finally, teachers develop a PD plan with SMARTIE goals and action steps. A complete PD plan identifies the specific skills and knowledge the teacher needs; high-quality PD resources; an implementation timeline; opportunities for support, collaboration, and reflection; and methods to evaluate the effectiveness of the PD.

Effective ESOL teachers work collaboratively with program directors and colleagues to connect their PD goals to the program goals. They review the data, priorities, requirements, and goals of their program to inform decision-making about their PD needs. For example, if a community has recently experienced a wave of immigrants who have limited formal education, the program may want their teachers to prioritize professional development on teaching emerging readers.

Similarly, a program's continuous improvement plan may include aligning the curriculum to the MA ELPS. In this scenario, PD priorities would include training staff in standards-based curriculum development.



### Participating in High-Quality Professional Development (HQPD)

When considering PD, ESOL teachers have many options: in-person, online, or blended offerings provided by the [SABES ESOL Curriculum and Instruction Center](#) or by other professional development organizations; peer coaching; facilitated study circles or professional learning communities; professional conferences. Whatever form the PD takes, it should meet the [ACLS definition of HQPD](#) and be led by a facilitator with expertise in ESOL teaching.

In addition to participating in formal, structured PD, effective ESOL teachers also explore self-directed and/or collaborative PD, seeking out ideas for improving their practice from colleagues and supervisors. This kind of PD may include a variety of activities: peer collaborations to develop and implement curriculum aligned to the MA ELPS; researching the cultures and current events of students' home countries; reading professional ESOL journals and sharing salient points with colleagues; visiting other ESOL programs to observe and learn new practices. When engaging in self-directed or collaborative PD, effective teachers remain mindful of HQPD standards and seek evidence of the impact of their efforts on student progress.

### Implementing PD into Teaching Practice

HQPD requires that teachers not only participate in PD activities but also apply what they are learning into their teaching practice. Effective teachers focus on their targeted PD goals and invite input and support from peers and supervisors to assess the extent to which they are implementing their PD plan and the impact on students. Together they review unit and lesson plans, observe student engagement, examine student work, analyze student performance, and plan appropriate interventions. Collaborating with colleagues with expertise in language instruction helps teachers identify the positive changes they are making in their practice, to what degree the changes are affecting student learning, and what further adjustments may be needed in order to achieve the intended PD goals.



### Assessing Impact of PD And Planning Next Steps for Continuous Improvement

A summative evaluation of PD goals looks at the attainment of these goals, specifically at the impact of the PD on student engagement and progress. This assessment includes analyses of collected data (e.g., attendance records, student outcomes), as well as teacher reflections and input from students, peers, coaches, and/or the program director. While a summative assessment of PD can be evaluative, it can also provide valuable information for future PD planning.



Effective teachers apply new learning to their teaching practice, observe the impact on students, and collaborate with colleagues and program directors to plan next steps for professional development.

To provide structure and guidance to programs for their teachers' PD, ACLS developed the [Educator Growth and Effectiveness \(EGE\) model](#). Programs have the option of adopting or adapting the EGE model according to teacher and program needs and available resources. The EGE model ensures that teachers' professional development is aligned with program goals. It uses student and program data to inform PD planning and collaboration among teachers and program director to set goals, assess progress, and determine next steps.

## Indicators of Knowledge and Sample Applications

**Standard 7:** The ESOL teacher engages in a continuous improvement process that includes self-assessment, goal setting, high-quality professional development, and ongoing reflection to gain greater expertise, develop new teaching approaches, and refine instructional practices.

### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

1. Regular reflection on one's own teaching practice and collaboration with colleagues can help teachers identify potential areas of focus for professional learning.

### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

#### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

1. Regular reflection on one's own teaching practice and collaboration with colleagues can help teachers identify potential areas of focus for professional learning.
  - Identify strengths and areas for improvement. For example:
    - Critically observe student work, engagement, and progress and their own role in student success
    - Write reflection notes during and after lessons/units and review them periodically to look for patterns
    - Elicit input from colleagues, supervisors, and students on their teaching practices
    - Use the ESOL Professional Standards, the MA ELPS, and other resources for self-assessment
    - Assess their knowledge of SLA principles, components of language, technology and media tools, and the MA ELPS, and seek PD to address gaps
    - Keep abreast of new research on second language acquisition, culturally responsive and sustaining teaching, and other research methodologies that improve adult ESOL students' learning
  - Conduct peer observations, review each other's lesson plans, and offer and ask for feedback
  - Participate in staff meetings and support team effort
  - In collaboration with colleagues and the program director, contribute to the development of strategies and actions to improve the program's overall performance
  - Take steps to integrate system-wide priorities into curriculum and instruction (e.g., civics, digital literacy, workforce preparation activities, alignment to the MA ELPS, culturally responsive and sustaining teaching)
2. Analyzing student data informs a reflective teaching practice and professional development needs.
  - Review data on student attendance and consider ways to improve it, as needed. For example:
    - Identify barriers to class attendance
    - Collaborate with advisors and other teachers on addressing these barriers
    - Collaborate with colleagues to update the curriculum to align more with students' interests, goals, and identities
    - Improve instructional practices so that they are more engaging
  - Review student outcome data and consider ways to improve it, as needed. For example:



**Standard 7:** The ESOL teacher engages in a continuous improvement process that includes self-assessment, goal setting, high-quality professional development, and ongoing reflection to gain greater expertise, develop new teaching approaches, and refine instructional practices.

**INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE**

What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

**SAMPLE APPLICATIONS**

What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ensure that the skills being assessed are included in the curriculum and instruction</li> <li>○ Align curriculum and instruction to the MA ELPS</li> <li>○ Collaborate with colleagues on observing each other’s classes, reviewing lesson plans, analyzing student work, and sharing feedback and ideas</li> </ul>
<p>3. Effective PD planning targets concrete goals and action steps designed to improve both instructional practice and learner outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure that improving student learning is front and center when setting goals, especially students in need of additional support such as SLIFE or students with learning differences</li> <li>● Seek input from program director/supervisor and colleagues to make sure one’s own PD goals align with the program’s continuous improvement plan</li> <li>● Develop an action plan around articulated PD goals, identifying PD activities, resources</li> <li>● Share individual PD plan with colleagues and program director/supervisor for guidance and suggestions</li> </ul>
<p>4. Participation in high quality PD is key to sustaining an effective professional practice at the individual and program levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Actively engage in sustained and collaborative PD (e.g., extended trainings, coaching, study circles, online discussion groups) through SABES or other professional development providers (e.g., <a href="#">TESOL</a>, <a href="#">LINC</a>S, <a href="#">NELRC</a>, <a href="#">English for New Bostonians</a>)</li> <li>● Read professional materials and publications related to current SLA research, technology, promising practices, and public policy</li> <li>● Engage in collegial discussion about the ESOL field, teaching practices, and public policy</li> <li>● Join <a href="#">MATSOL</a>, <a href="#">TESOL</a>, <a href="#">MCAE</a>, and/or other professional organizations focused on adult education and ESOL instruction</li> <li>● Obtain Massachusetts ABE/ESOL teaching license, TESOL certification, or a higher education degree in the field of TESOL</li> </ul>

**Standard 7:** The ESOL teacher engages in a continuous improvement process that includes self-assessment, goal setting, high-quality professional development, and ongoing reflection to gain greater expertise, develop new teaching approaches, and refine instructional practices.

#### INDICATORS OF KNOWLEDGE

##### What Effective ESOL Teachers Know

5. Assessing impact of PD on teaching helps educators plan for continuous improvement.

#### SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

##### What Effective ESOL Teachers Do

- Based on participation in PD activities, identify and implement specific new instructional strategies
- Track and document changes in practice (e.g., reflective notes, peer or coach observation with checklist or rubric)
- Engage in ongoing reflection and assessment of new teaching practices (e.g., critically observe and assess the impact on student work, engagement, and progress)
- Review and incorporate feedback from students (e.g., questionnaires, evaluations, oral feedback, informal meetings) for suggestions to improve teaching and learning
- Meet with PD coach and/or supervisor to debrief PD activities, assess attainment of PD goals, review student data, and identify next steps

## Appendix A: Summary of ESOL Professional Standards

SUBJECT MATTER KNOWLEDGE STANDARDS 1, 2		INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND DELIVERY STANDARDS 3, 4, 6		ASSESSMENT STANDARD 5	PERSONAL GROWTH STANDARD 7
<p><b>SLA Principles</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Authentic Communication</li> <li>2. Learning vs. Acquisition</li> <li>3. Comprehensible Input</li> <li>4. Comprehensible Output</li> <li>5. Stages of Second Language Acquisition                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ pre-production</li> <li>○ early production</li> <li>○ speech emergence</li> <li>○ intermediate</li> <li>○ advanced</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. Interlanguage</li> <li>7. Learner Variables                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ personal</li> <li>○ socio-cultural</li> <li>○ academic</li> </ul> </li> <li>8. BICS and CALP Affective Filter</li> </ol>	<p><b>Components of Language</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Phonology and Phonetics</li> <li>2. Lexicon and Morphology</li> <li>3. Grammar and Syntax</li> <li>4. Discourse and Pragmatics</li> <li>5. Metalinguistic Awareness</li> </ol>	<p><b>Curriculum Planning</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Backwards design</li> <li>2. Coherence</li> <li>3. Cohesiveness</li> <li>4. Culturally diverse and relevant content and materials</li> <li>5. Contextualized language</li> </ol> <p><b>Instructional delivery and culturally responsive-sustaining practices</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Relevance and inclusiveness                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Equitable and inclusive environment</li> <li>○ Students’ identities as assets</li> <li>○ High expectations for all students</li> <li>○ Focus on critical thinking, civic engagement, and social justice</li> <li>○ Critical assessment of beliefs and assumptions</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Rigor                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Critical thinking</li> <li>○ Differentiated instruction</li> <li>○ Gradual release of responsibility</li> <li>○ Assessment</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Engagement and interaction                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Student collaboration</li> <li>○ Limited teacher talk</li> <li>○ Judicious use of corrective feedback</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Key WIOA mandates                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Workforce preparation activities</li> <li>○ Civics literacy</li> <li>○ Digital literacy</li> <li>○ Family literacy</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p><b>Key elements:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Asses to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify student needs</li> <li>○ Inform instruction</li> <li>○ Plan differentiated interventions</li> <li>○ Determine and monitor student progress</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Teach students how to self-asses</li> <li>3. Share and reflect on assessment results with:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Students</li> <li>○ Colleagues</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p><b>Key elements:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reflective practice</li> <li>2. Analysis of student data</li> <li>3. Collaboration with colleagues</li> <li>4. PD goals and PD planning</li> <li>5. Participation in high-quality PD</li> <li>6. Implementation of PD into practice</li> <li>7. Assessment of PD and continuous improvement</li> </ol>	

## Appendix B: Summary of 2021 Revisions

<p><b>STANDARD 1: PRINCIPLES OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (SLA)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasizes teacher knowledge of SLA principles</li> <li>• Identifies key SLA principles and provides a brief supporting explanation for each</li> <li>• Includes references to recent research on the brain and learning and how this research informs practice</li> <li>• Aligns with the Knowledge Domain in the <a href="#">Professional Standards for Teachers of Adult Education</a>, which states that an effective ESOL teacher: <i>Demonstrates knowledge of current research and a comprehensive understanding of language acquisition, communicative competence, and the structure and conventions of English by designing engaging learning experiences that advance students’ English language development and proficiency</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>STANDARD 2: COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies and names the components of language</li> <li>• Includes additional detail about the academic and professional language needs of learners for accuracy and clear pronunciation</li> <li>• Includes additional examples of evidence-based practices for teaching the components of language</li> </ul>
<p><b>STANDARD 3: CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND SUSTAINING TEACHING</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrates culturally responsive and sustaining teaching practices</li> <li>• Increases expectations for what teachers should know and be able to do to address learners’ diverse cultures, identities, needs, and goals</li> <li>• Reflects the official position of <a href="#">MA DESE on Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching</a>: <i>It is critical to recognize that, regardless of the terminology used, the goal of this work is for educators to have the knowledge and capacity to serve all students well. In order to be highly effective, educators must develop an authentic understanding of the students and adults in their school communities, ensure that their students’ experiences in school are affirming of who they are and what they bring to the school community, and unpack how their own culture impacts their worldview and approach.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>STANDARD 4: CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes an expanded focus on instructional planning in contrast to delivery</li> <li>• Describes what well-structured units and lesson plans looks like, a process for creating them, and the relationship between units and lessons</li> <li>• Emphasizes the importance of coherence and cohesiveness in curriculum development and lesson planning</li> <li>• Describes key elements of instructional planning:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ adherence to SLA principles</li> <li>○ alignment to the MA ELPS</li> <li>○ cultural responsiveness</li> <li>○ sufficient rigor to support college and career readiness</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Addresses planning for remote instruction as needed</li> </ul>

## Summary of 2021 Revisions (Continued)

STANDARD 5: ASSESSMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This standard is now standard 5 to align with the principles of <a href="#">Backward Design</a></li><li>• Revisions stem from developments in the field of neuroscience and an increased understanding of the value of feedback, self-assessment, recall activities, reflection, and metacognition for learning in general and language acquisition in particular</li><li>• Includes additional detail related to making progress visible to learners and sharing assessment results with students and colleagues</li></ul>
STANDARD 6: INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This standard is now standard 6 to align with the principles of <a href="#">Backward Design</a></li><li>• Highlights three key elements of effective ESOL instruction, with observable look-fors<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ relevance and inclusiveness</li><li>○ contextualization of language learning in rigorous content</li><li>○ engaging and communicative interaction</li></ul></li><li>• Explains what effective ESOL teachers do to deliver instruction aligned with these elements</li></ul>
STANDARD 7: PROFESSIONAL GROWTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revisions stem largely from the development of the <a href="#">Professional Standards for Teachers of Adult Education</a></li><li>• Highlights reflective practice, use of data, collaboration and shared responsibility, and integration of HQPD into practice as strategies to improve teacher effectiveness</li><li>• Aligns with the ACLS Educator Growth and Effectiveness (EGE) Model</li></ul>

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