



BREAKOUT SESSION  
HANDOUTS

**Overview of AZ Language Development  
Approach (LDA) and the 4 Principles**

*Click on the following  
handouts to quickly access  
throughout the session.*

**Overview of Arizona's  
Language  
Development  
Approach and the  
Four Principles  
Guided Notes**

**From Deficit-Based to  
Asset-Based:  
Breaking Down the  
Wall One Essential  
Shift at a Time**

**Arizona's Language  
Development  
Approach**

# Overview of Arizona's Language Development Approach and the Four Principles Guided Notes

(a copy of the presentation will be available on the OELAS website following the PELL meeting)

**Today's Objective:** You will develop a deeper understanding of Arizona's Language Development Approach by exploring each of the four principles within this foundational document.

## Arizona's Language Development Approach

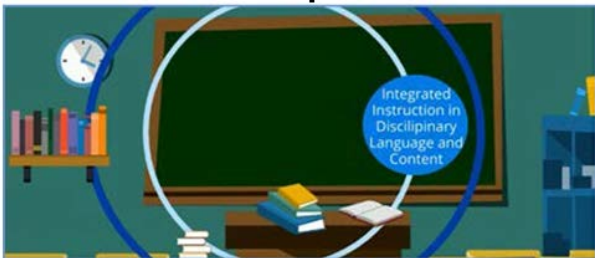


**Breakout Room Prompt**  
Please introduce yourself to your team and share your thoughts on the information shared in the video.

## Principle 1



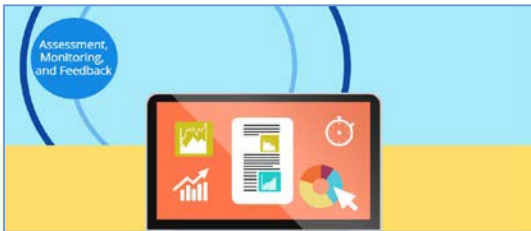
## Principle 2



### Principle 3



### Principle 4



### Breakout Room Prompt

With your group, take a moment to reflect on the four principles and how they connect to your current EL program.

**Consider:**

- What is in place and working?
- What is in place and would benefit from refinement?

What is something that is in progress or a future goal?

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# From Deficit-Based to Assets- Based: Breaking Down the Wall One Essential Shift at a Time

***Debbie Zacarian and Diane Staehr Fenner in conversation with Dan Alpert***

January 22, 2020



**Dan Alpert:**  
**Debbie and Diane, tell us more about the urgency for using an assets-based versus a deficits-based approach when working with our English learners (ELs).**

Think about how many of us focus our attention on ELs by poring over data about their progress learning English, comparing their performance on standardized tests and rates of graduation with non-EL peers, and lamenting what we perceive as THE problem: that our ELs are not learning English fast enough. And how many of us then find ourselves responding to what we believe students don't possess (English) as opposed to what they do or have developed as a result of being reared in a language and culture other than U.S. English?

While this type of data collection and analysis is helpful, it hasn't resulted in closing the opportunity gaps between ELs and their English-fluent peers. Research in psychology and education demonstrates that focusing on people's strengths—that is, what they already possess inherently or have learned and experienced—can lead to far greater academic and social-emotional success than does focusing on what we perceive as their weaknesses. It requires that we identify ELs' and their families' invaluable personal, cultural, social, and life experiences and draw from these understandings to create programming that is meaningful and purposeful for our students.

[the-wall-one-essential-shift-at-a-time/](#)

An example is a chemistry teacher whose students are studying thermal reaction. He finds ways to connect the curriculum with his students' experiences. He engages them in exploring common products that are created using this process. As a model, he shows how a metal table is made. He tasks small groups to explore additional products made from the thermal process. One group excitedly discusses how jewelry is created—another, how it is used to repair their families' cars. He invites the father of an EL to his class to demonstrate the process he uses as a plumber to weld pipes together. Enacting such practices supports our using an assets-based approach.

*“RESEARCH IN PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION DEMONSTRATES THAT FOCUSING ON PEOPLE’S STRENGTHS—THAT IS, WHAT THEY ALREADY POSSESS INHERENTLY OR HAVE LEARNED AND EXPERIENCED—CAN LEAD TO FAR GREATER ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUCCESS THAN DOES FOCUSING ON WHAT WE PERCEIVE AS THEIR WEAKNESSES.”*

**Dan Alpert: Aside from the obvious asset of multilingualism, what are examples of some common assets that our multilingual students (and their families) hold?**

When we look at students' assets, we should begin by expanding our view beyond what we are required to do according to federal regulations to see more than the language a child uses to communicate, the level of English proficiency, and performance on state-approved assessments.

Broadening our perspectives and a deeper understanding of our students can greatly help us to build more successful programming. To do this, it's critical to learn as much as we can about students' and families' personal, social, cultural, and life experiences and partner with them on behalf of their children's academic and social-emotional development. This information is invaluable for building programming that capitalizes on students' and families' strengths and

<https://www.languagemagazine.com/2020/01/22/from-deficit-based-to-assets-based-breaking-down-the-wall-one-essential-shift-at-a-time/>

assets and welcoming and valuing their participation. Whether we do this in a school registration office, in a welcome center, while families are taking a tour of the school, or in a classroom or home visit, it's critical to demonstrate a genuine interest in partnering with families and honoring, valuing, and acknowledging the many strengths that they share with us.

The following suggested questions are intended to bolster our efforts from the start:

- What makes [name of child] special?
- What particular talents and skills would you like me to know about [name of child]?
- What subjects does [name of child] enjoy learning at home and in school?
- What are things you enjoy doing as a family?
- In what ways were you involved in [name of child's] prior school or would like to be involved here?
- What special talents or interests would you consider sharing with students in [name of child's] class (e.g., work interest and hobbies)?

Questions such as these also convey that, as caring educators, we believe in the importance of getting to know students and their families, and that we are comfortable with and embrace family involvement.

### **Dan Alpert: What are some ways that classroom teachers can learn about the assets of multilingual learners?**

One way classroom teachers can build bridges and help foster connections with multilingual learners is to have them share their very own stories. Teachers of younger students can first model the task of students drawing a personal narrative storyboard or series of images, then have students write a response to the sentence prompt: "What I wish my teacher knew about me."

Teachers can ask older newcomer students to write personal narratives. Both groups of students could use technology to support their writing. We suggest that teachers have models of student work from students at different levels of English proficiency as well as from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to share. To begin this project, teachers can interview students and ask them to talk or write about themselves in their home languages, offering appropriate scaffolding for these tasks.

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Each of these activities supports the process of learning more about students' lives and experiences so that educators develop a better understanding of the linguistic and cultural assets that students bring to their classrooms. We offer one piece of advice, which is to be sure to give multilingual learners the choice to tell as much of their stories as they feel comfortable with or to have the option to not share them at all, as students may have experienced traumatic events that they wish not to share.

Students and their families who are open to the idea could also publish their stories in school newspapers to reach a wider audience. We also suggest inviting parents and family members into the classroom and having a celebration to showcase students' stories.

### **Dan Alpert: What are some strategies for challenging deficit thinking that may pervade the culture of a school?**

To disrupt deficit thinking, we encourage teachers and administrators to share news of multilingual learners' successes—both great and small—within the school and the district. Many examples exist of ways to showcase multilingual students' growth academically as well as personally. For instance, we often see newspaper articles published each spring about current or former English learners who have become high school valedictorians. These success stories provide one concrete vehicle for those who may operate from a deficit perspective to take note of one way in which a multilingual learner contributes positively to school culture.

Another way to challenge deficit thinking at the school level is to invite successful multilingual learners, including those in college, receiving technical training, or in careers, back to your school in person or by video to highlight their success and also share what helped them achieve. If you hold such an event, be sure to invite the whole school to see the assets that these students bring and be sure to ask students about the role their home languages and cultures played in their success.

On an individual level, teachers may notice when others make deficit-based statements about multilingual learners. These often-uncomfortable interactions actually provide an opportunity to support a colleague's shift from a deficit- to an assets-based disposition.

We encourage teachers to be thoughtful about challenging others' thinking in order to do so without permanently disrupting crucial relationships with colleagues. All educators—no matter what their title or how many years of experience they have—are positioned to serve as agents of change when it comes to a colleague gradually shifting to an assets-based view of multilingual learners and their families. If you encounter a colleague making deficit-based statements, we suggest first listening to understand the reason for your colleague's deficit perspective. Acknowledge where the deficit or frustration might come from, offer some concrete help to that colleague to better support their multilingual learners, and follow through on your offer.

**Debbie Zacarian**, EdD, is known for her expertise in strengths-based leadership, instruction, and family partnership practices with diverse student and family populations. She provides professional development, strategic planning, and policy work with school districts and state agencies and organizations.

**Diane Staehr Fenner**, PhD, is the president of SupportEd, a woman-owned small business based in the Washington, DC, region that provides EL professional development and technical assistance to schools, districts, states, and the U.S. Department of Education.

Debbie and Diane are coauthors of *Breaking Down the Wall: Essential Shifts for English Learners' Success* (Corwin, 2019).

**Dan Alpert** is publisher and program director for equity and professional learning at Corwin.

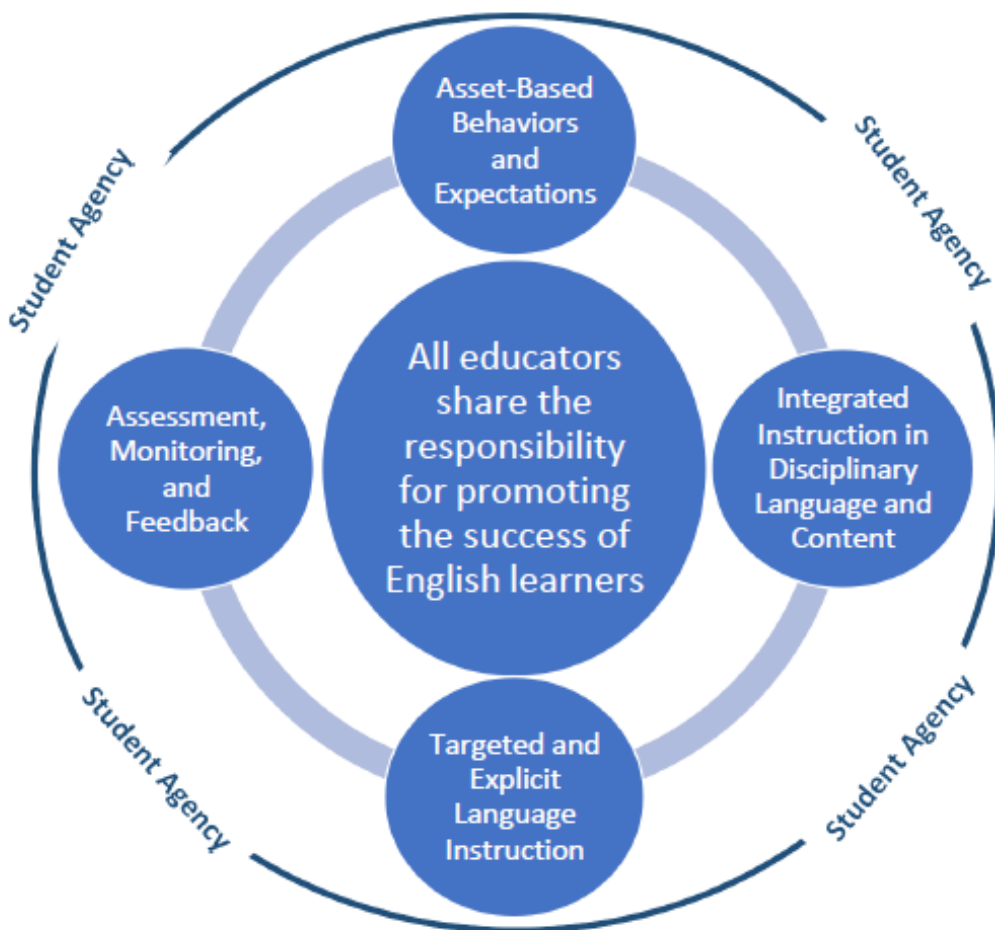
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ARIZONA'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

### Arizona's Language Development Approach

Underlying Arizona's Language Development Approach is the foundational understanding that English learner (EL) students are valuable members of our education community, and all individuals at every level within the educational system have an active role in ensuring the success and achievement of the over 80,000 multilingual learners who attend Arizona schools. The four principles that surround the core reflect the research-based and non-negotiable components of a comprehensive instructional program for Arizona's EL students. The outer ring identifies the overarching goal of language and content instruction for English learner students; through implementation of the four principles, Arizona's EL students will develop a sense of agency, confidence, and determination.



## ARIZONA'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

### Principle One: Asset-Based Behaviors and Expectations

English learner (EL) students bring rich linguistic resources and cultural knowledge with them to the school environment. All systems and programs leverage these assets and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate these contributions. All systems and programs align with asset-based behaviors and expectations and provide opportunities and supports to ensure culturally and linguistically sustaining practices for EL students.

#### All educators:

- recognize that multilingualism and biliteracy are assets.
- leverage home languages and cultures as assets for both the EL student and his/her community (e.g., peers, teachers, etc.)
- ensure students' cultural and linguistic assets are acknowledged and respected in a safe, affirming, and inclusive climate.
- consistently acknowledge and build on the background knowledge and prior experiences of EL students.
- are responsive to the different strengths, needs, and identities of all EL students, including those with special needs.
- support the unique socio-emotional health and development of EL students.
- build and foster strong family, community, and school partnerships.
- recognize there is no universal EL student profile and no one-size-fits-all approach.

Asset-based behaviors and expectations will support the development of student agency when educators:

- provide opportunities for EL students to show mastery of competency.
- support students in finding their zone of proximal development.
- encourage students to recognize the strengths and experiences they bring to the learning community
- reinforce growth mindset.
- highlight examples of fellow students who are overcoming challenges.
- address students' social, emotional, and physical needs.

Through participation in an asset-based learning environment, EL students will develop confidence in their own skills and knowledge, a sense of self-efficacy, and a belief in their own ability to achieve and be successful.



## ARIZONA'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

### Principle Two: Integrated Instruction in Disciplinary Language and Content

All educators share the responsibility for designing instruction that integrates language and literacy development with content learning. This is accomplished by using content standards to plan instruction along with the English Language Proficiency Standards to support differentiation by language proficiency level. Through the use of scaffolded supports, academic language development, and collaborative discussions, reading, and writing, educators help students develop disciplinary content knowledge, language, and autonomy.

#### All educators:

- differentiate disciplinary language instruction using the English Language Proficiency Standards.
- provide differentiated scaffolds to make grade level concepts comprehensible in receptive, productive, and interactive language and to support students to make informed and deliberate choices about language when speaking and writing.
- model learning approaches so students can construct meaning using metacognition strategies.
- immerse students in a language rich environment and engage in interactive and discussion-based learning tasks about the language of complex content-area texts.
- plan and provide opportunities for students to work together in intellectually rich and integrated learning environments around worthy and engaging inquiry questions, texts, and topics.
- support EL students' deep learning and ability to engage in extended academic discourse and abundant, authentic writing.

Integrated Instruction in Disciplinary Language and Content will support the development of student agency when educators:

- provide choices or open-ended opportunities to select strategies and tactics for mastery of language and content.
- encourage independent learning by teaching effective strategies for learning language and content.
- encourage initiative by creating learning environments that increase motivation and engagement with language and content.

Through participation in integrated language and content instruction, EL students will develop a sense of voice, confidence, and self-determination as they use content and language in tandem to meet their goals.



## ARIZONA'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

### Principle Three: Targeted and Explicit Language Instruction

Explicit language instruction is a critical opportunity to intentionally support English learner (EL) students in developing the discourse practices they need to engage with rigorous, grade-level disciplinary content. Just as literacy and language should be integrated into content instruction, so should content and disciplinary practices be integrated into language instruction. Educators use the English Language Proficiency Standards with content material to teach language.

#### All educators:

- create opportunities for students to use language and reflect on their understanding across the four language domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and in direct connection to rigorous, grade-level content.
- design instruction that fosters EL students' autonomy by equipping them with the strategies necessary to comprehend and use language in a variety of academic settings.
- immerse students in a language rich environment that fosters critical thinking and problem solving.
- utilize language supports, academic language development, and opportunities for academic discourse.
- provide age/grade level appropriate instruction & materials that are culturally and linguistically appropriate and aligned to the English Language Proficiency Standards.
- design explicit instruction that provides students with an understanding of how language functions with a content discipline lens.

Targeted and explicit language instruction will support the development of student agency when educators:

- provide choices or open-ended opportunities to select strategies and tactics for language acquisition.
- encourage independent learning by teaching effective strategies for learning language.
- encourage initiative by creating learning environments that increase motivation and engagement with language acquisition.

Through participation in targeted and explicit language instruction, EL students will develop a sense of voice, confidence, and self-efficacy around their language use.



ARIZONA'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

Principle Four: Assessment, Monitoring, and Feedback

Districts and schools use English Language Proficiency Standards, diagnostic tools, formative assessment practices, and summative assessments to measure progress of English learner (EL) students' language and content knowledge to inform instruction.

All educators:

- use Arizona English Language Proficiency Standards to align instruction and assessment on a language learning continuum.
- use district and teacher formative and summative assessments that require sophisticated uses of language embedded in authentic and rich content.
- use analytical rubrics and assessment data to provide meaningful feedback on language development, skill development, and content knowledge.
- use short cycle formative assessment data (i.e., minute-by-minute, day-by-day) to gather evidence on student progress.
- use student progress evidence to guide teachers' and students' productive next steps to support both content learning and academic language development.
- Use Arizona state assessment data to evaluate language and content instructional effectiveness and inform future language and academic program decisions.

Assessment, monitoring, and feedback will support the development of student agency when educators:

- design a pathway to learning for EL students that provides opportunities for self-direction.
- consistently provide timely and meaningful feedback.
- provide varied opportunities for EL students to show mastery of competency.
- support EL students to develop awareness of their strengths and needs through regular progress checks.
- help EL students develop the habit of self-reflection using various formative assessments.

With regular assessment, monitoring, feedback, and educator guidance, EL students have opportunities to set their own goals and learn how to measure and evaluate their progress towards those goals.

