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The Power of Collaboration: Building Bridges in Dual Identification for Multilingual Learners

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Agenda

Part 1: Overall Components

Part 2: Strategies

Part 3: Action Steps

Learning Objectives:

► Learning Objective 1

- Explain the critical role of collaboration among educators, specialists, and families.

► Learning Objective 2

- Identify at least three strategies for fostering effective communication and establishing clear roles.

► Learning Objective 3

- Describe how diverse expertise supports accurate dual identification and tailored support

Why Dual Identification Matters

- Importance of identifying both language and disability-related needs.

- Ensures equitable access to language and special education supports.

- Prevent misidentification or delayed support.

- Recognizes the complexity of MLs learning profiles

- Ensures equity and access for multilingual learners (MLs).

The Role of Collaboration

- Promotes a holistic understanding of student needs

- Aligns instruction across departments

- Encourages shared accountability and problem solving

Who's on the Team

▶ • General Education Teachers

▶ • ELD Specialists

▶ • Special Education Providers

▶ • Related Service Providers (SLPs, Psychologists)

▶ • Families and Caregivers

▶ • Administrators

Strategy #1: Foster Effective Communication

- ▶ • Use shared tools (Online registration, meeting notes, progress trackers)
- ▶ • Schedule consistent team meetings
- ▶ • Use inclusive language and active listening
- ▶ • Provide interpreters or translation as needed

Strategy #1: Foster Effective Communication

▶ • Use shared tools (Online registration, meeting notes, progress trackers)

▶ The district teams use the Dual-Eligible Service Plan and Collaboration Tool and Google Workspace to track both language and special education services.

▶ For example, a MLL teacher and a special education case manager can enter shared notes on a student's IEP goals and English language progress, ensuring both areas of need are visible to all service providers and families. Meeting summaries and progress updates are uploaded in a shared folder accessible to all authorized staff.

Strategy #1: Foster Effective Communication

▶ • Schedule consistent team meetings

▶ Schools in the district establish biweekly collaborative meetings where MLL teachers, special education case managers, social workers, and general education teachers review data and align instructional supports.

▶ These meetings focus on reviewing student progress, using student-data review protocols, adjusting interventions, and planning inclusive instructional strategies—ensuring continuity of support across settings.

Strategy #1: Foster Effective Communication

▶ • Use inclusive language and active listening

Educators model inclusive communication by using strength-based and person-first language (e.g., multilingual learners with disabilities, students with IEPs, and emerging multilingual learners) and by encouraging all team members—including paraprofessionals and family liaisons—to share insights.

During IEP or student support meetings, staff practice active listening, restating family input to confirm understanding and ensure parent voices guide decision-making.

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Strategy #1: Foster Effective Communication

▶ • Provide interpreters or translation as needed

The district ensures interpreters are present at IEP meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and family communications for families whose primary language is not English.

For written communication, such as progress reports, consent forms, and service plans, the district uses its LanguageLine translation services or Talking Points or multilingual support staff to provide accurate translations, ensuring families fully understand their child's rights, goals, and supports.

Strategy #2: Establish Clear Roles and Responsibilities

▶ • Clarify roles early in the process

▶ • Identify leads for data collection and parent communication

▶ • Avoid duplication and confusion

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Strategy #2: Establish Clear Roles and Responsibilities

▶ • Clarify roles early in the process

At the start of each school year, the district establishes a joint planning meeting between MLL teachers, special education case managers, and general education staff to define clear responsibilities.

For example, the special education teacher leads on IEP goals and accommodations, while the MLL teacher focuses on English language development objectives.

These defined roles are documented in the Dual-Eligible Service Plan to ensure every team member knows their responsibilities in instruction, progress monitoring, and family communication.

Strategy #2: Establish Clear Roles and Responsibilities

▶ • Identify leads for data collection and parent communication

Each dual-eligible student (both MLL and SPED) has a designated data and communication lead who coordinates updates to families.

This person ensures consistent messaging about academic and language growth, organizes interpreters for meetings, and compiles assessment data into one progress tracker.

This prevents conflicting or repetitive outreach to families and builds trust through clear, unified communication.

Strategy #2: Establish Clear Roles and Responsibilities

- Avoid duplication and confusion

▶ The district teams use shared electronic records and collaboration templates so that student plans are updated in one central location.

▶ For instance, if the MLL teacher enters English language assessment data, the special education teacher can view and integrate it into IEP updates—eliminating the need to gather the same data twice. This shared system streamlines service delivery, reduces overlap in student pull-outs, and ensures that instruction is cohesive rather than fragmented.

Strategy #3: Build Trust with Families

▶ •Engage families as equal partners

▶ • Respect cultural and linguistic identities

▶ • Include family insights in evaluations and plans

▶ • Communicate in preferred language

Strategy #3: Build Trust with Families

▶ •Engage families as equal partners

The district invites families to participate as active decision-makers during IEP, ML, and intervention planning meetings.

For example, schools hold family partnership meetings before formal evaluations, where parents can share their child's strengths, needs, and learning preferences. Families are encouraged to review drafts of plans and provide feedback before finalization, ensuring that supports reflect family priorities and lived experiences.
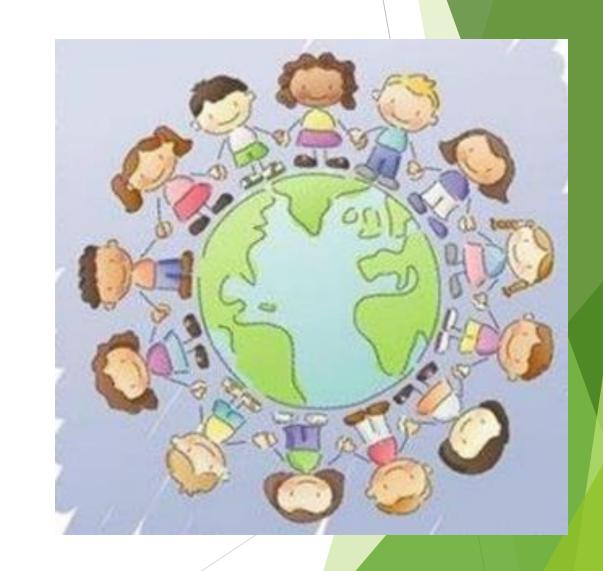
Strategy #3: Build Trust with Families

▶ • Respect cultural and linguistic identities

▶ Educators and support staff participate in cultural competency and anti-bias training to better understand and honor the diverse identities of students and families. In practice, schools celebrate multilingual and multicultural events, display student home languages throughout classrooms, and incorporate students' cultural backgrounds into instruction. This approach affirms students' identities and builds strong relationships between home and school.

Strategy #3: Build Trust with Families

▶ • Include family insights in evaluations and plans

▶ When developing IEPs or EL service plans, the district teams use family input forms or structured interviews to collect information about the student's learning history, strengths, and communication patterns in the home language.

▶ For example, families may describe how their child learns best or what strategies work at home, and this information is embedded into both the IEP and English language development goals. This ensures the whole child is understood within their cultural and linguistic context.

Strategy #3: Build Trust with Families

▶ • Communicate in preferred language

▶ The district provides interpreters at all formal meetings and uses translated documents (consent forms, progress reports, family guides) in the family's preferred language. Staff access the district's LanguageLine or Talking Point or TransACT translation services for phone calls, written notices, and digital communications. Schools also maintain a family communication log to confirm that updates are consistently delivered in the language families understand best.

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Part 3: The Action steps

▶ Step 1: Building a Collaborative and Culturally Responsive Team

▶ Step 2: Collect and Analyze Comprehensive Student Data

▶ Step 3: Engage Students and Families as Equal Partners

▶ Step 4: Design and Implement Culturally and Linguistically Responsive IEPs

Step 1: Building a Collaborative and Culturally Responsive Team

1. Establish Cross-Department Partnerships and Clarify Roles Early

▶ The schools in the district form ELD-SPED-General Education collaboration teams at the start of the school year to ensure shared responsibility for dual-eligible students.

▶ For example, at one of the buildings, the administrator convenes a joint planning meeting where the SPED case manager leads on IEP goals, the MLL teacher leads on English language development, and the general education teacher aligns classroom instruction. Roles and responsibilities are clearly documented in the Dual-Eligible Service Plan tools in the shared google drive.

Step 1: Building a Collaborative and Culturally Responsive Team

2. Implement MTSS and Pre-Referral Supports Collaboratively

▶ Following the district's MTSS framework, ELD and SPED teachers work together during Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions to determine whether a student's challenges stem from language acquisition or a potential disability.

▶ For instance, a student showing reading delays receives both targeted language development and specialized instructional supports, with progress monitored in the system. This ensures equitable access to intervention before considering a special education evaluation.

Step 1: Building a Collaborative and Culturally Responsive Team

3. Use Shared Tools and Regular Team Meetings for Alignment

▶ Teams meet biweekly to review student progress, co-plan instruction, and adjust supports using data in the Dual-Eligible Service Plan and Collaboration Tool.

▶ For example, the MLL and SPED teachers document co-teaching strategies for an English Learner with a significant cognitive disability, and administrators review notes to ensure consistent implementation across settings.

Step 2: Collect and Analyze Comprehensive Student Data

1. Collect Comprehensive, Culturally Relevant Data

▶ The district teams gather multiple data sources—academic performance, ACCESS for ELLs scores, classroom work samples, and observation notes—to understand each student's learning profile.

▶ For example, before referring a bilingual student for evaluation, the team reviews progress monitoring data from MTSS interventions and compares performance to peers with similar English proficiency levels.

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Step 2: Collect and Analyze Comprehensive Student Data

2. Include Family and Language Background Information

▶ Following district practice, teams conduct family interviews and use home language questionnaires to understand the student's development in both languages.

▶ At one of the buildings, for instance, families share learning strengths and cultural context that clarify whether academic struggles stem from limited exposure to English or an underlying learning difficulty. This input is documented in the Dual-Eligible Service Plan for team reference.

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Step 2: Collect and Analyze Comprehensive Student Data

3. Use Shared Tools and Team Review Before Evaluation

▶ Before initiating a special education evaluation, the cross-disciplinary team reviews all academic, linguistic, and family data in the Dual-Eligible Service Plan and Collaboration Tool.

▶ For example, MLL and SPED teachers analyze side-by-side data to confirm whether language development patterns align with expected growth. Only after this full review does the team proceed with evaluation, ensuring decisions are equitable and linguistically appropriate.

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Step 3: Engage Students and Families as Equal Partners

1. Engage Families Throughout the Process

▶ The district ensures families are partners from pre-referral through goal development.

▶ For example, during initial MTSS meetings, families provide insights about their child's learning preferences and home experiences, which are then incorporated into IEP or intervention plans.

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Step 3: Engage Students and Families as Equal Partners

2. Communicate in Families' Preferred Languages

▶ Schools use interpreters, bilingual staff, or translated materials to ensure families fully understand discussions and decisions.

▶ At all of the buildings in the district, all meeting invitations, progress reports, and consent forms are sent in the family's preferred language, and interpreters are present during conferences.

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Step 3: Engage Students and Families as Equal Partners

3. Include Student Voice and Document Engagement

▶ Students are invited to share their goals and reflections during meetings. All family and student input is recorded in the Dual-Eligible Service Plan and Collaboration Tool , ensuring transparency and consistency across the team.

▶ For instance, a student might indicate a preferred method of learning, which the team incorporates into instructional strategies.

Step 4: Design and Implement Culturally and Linguistically Responsive IEPs

▶ 1. Develop Integrated and Inclusive IEPs

▶ The district teams create IEPs that include both English language development (ELD) goals and individualized learning supports.

▶ For example, at one of the buildings, an MLL teacher collaborates with a special education case manager to design goals that address both academic vocabulary growth and reading comprehension strategies aligned with the student's IEP.

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Step 4: Design and Implement Culturally and Linguistically Responsive IEPs

- ▶ 2. Use the Dual-Eligible Service Plan and Collaboration Tool for Alignment

- ▶ Educators use the Dual-Eligible Service Plan and Collaboration Tool to document shared goals, instructional strategies, and progress updates.

- ▶ For instance, the MLL and SPED teachers jointly record student progress after co-taught lessons, allowing administrators and families to see how services are coordinated across disciplines.

Step 4: Design and Implement Culturally and Linguistically Responsive IEPs

▶ 3. Implement Responsive Instruction and Review Progress with Families

▶ Instruction includes co-teaching, scaffolded supports, and culturally relevant materials that reflect student backgrounds. Teams meet quarterly to review data and adjust services as needed.

▶ For example, if a student shows faster growth in oral language than in writing, the team updates goals and shares progress with families in their preferred language.

Process Considerations and Action Steps

▶ • Ensures timely, equitable access to services for all potential English Learners.

• District timeline:

▶ - 30 days at year start, 2 weeks midyear for EL identification.

• Screening tools:

▶ - WIDA Screener, Online Screener, and Alternate Screener (depending on profile).

▶ • Collaboration between MLL team, case managers, and coordinators ensures accurate placement and monitoring.

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Questions & Contact Information

▶ **Questions or Reflections?**

▶ Thank you for engaging in today's presentation. We welcome your thoughts, questions, and feedback on supporting multilingual learners and students with special education needs collaboratively.

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▶ **District 287 Mission**

▶ *"Committed to inspiring each learner to achieve their highest potential through equitable, innovative, and inclusive education."*