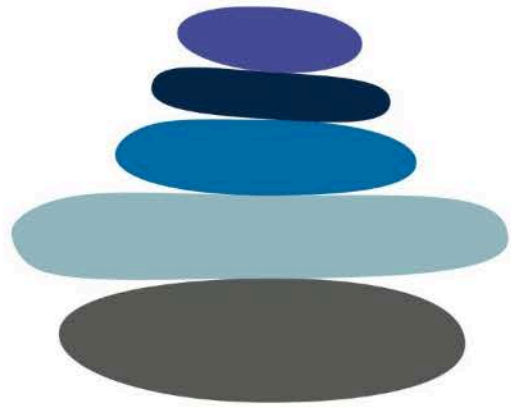


Welcome!

For today's session, you will need:

- Google Folder:
bit.ly/MaineSecondaryFolder
- Series Padlet:
bit.ly/MaineSecPadlet





SupportEd

Peer Learning and Intentional Student Grouping to Scaffold Literacy and Numeracy for MLs

Secondary Cohort

Maine DOE

April 9, 2026

Thank You!



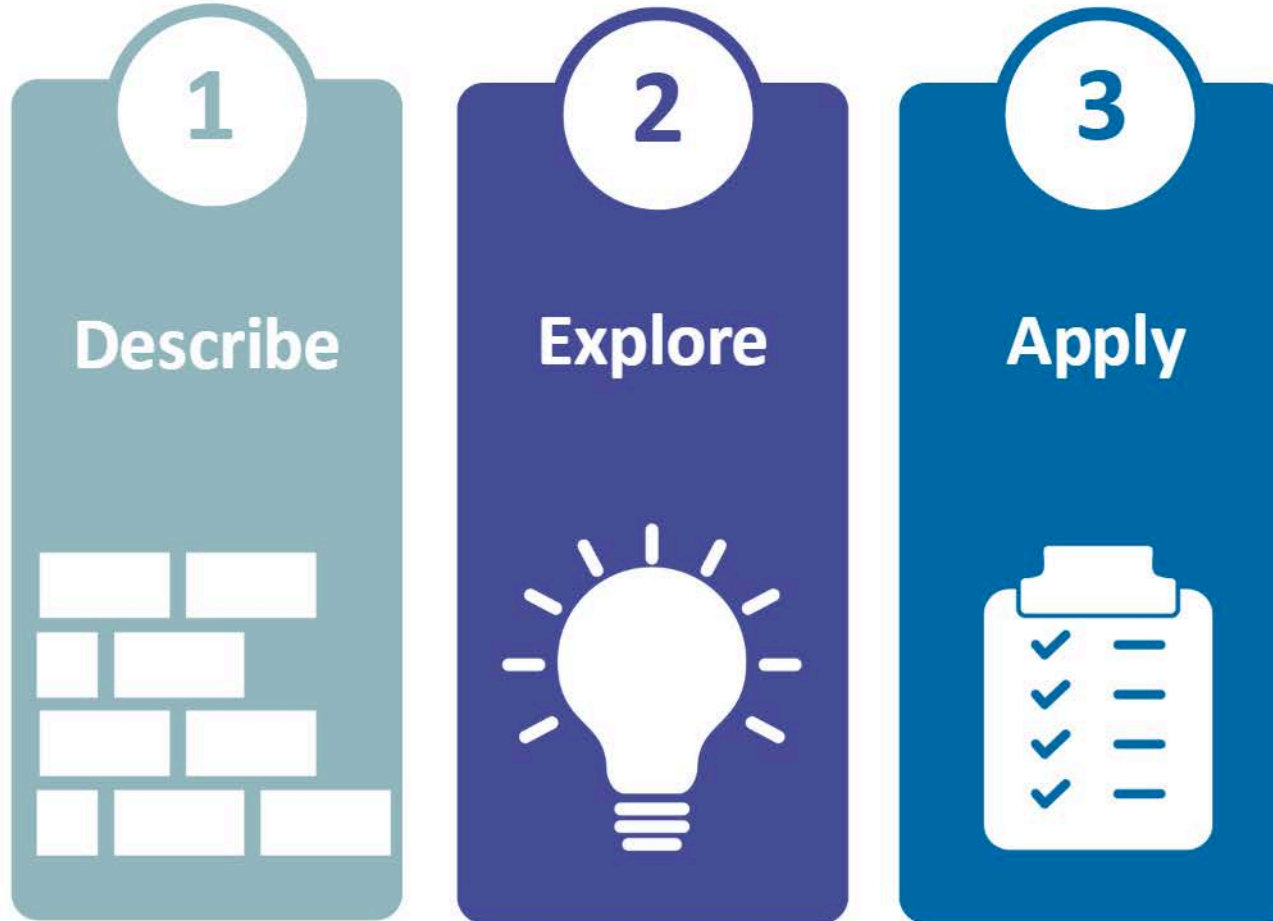
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Series Overview (Document 1)

Session	Topic	Date and Time
1	Knowing Your Multilingual Learners and Using ML Research to Support Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Development	January 22, 2026 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm
2	Building Literacy and Numeracy for MLs with Instructional Materials Scaffolds	February 26, 2026 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm
3	Session facilitated by Maine DOE	March 19, 2026 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm
4	Peer Learning and Intentional Student Grouping to Scaffold Literacy and Numeracy for MLs	April 9, 2026 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm
5	Scaffolding Through Instructional Practices for MLs	May 7, 2026 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm
6	Reflecting and Goal Setting for ML Success (combined meeting with Secondary Cohort)	June 3, 2026 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm



Session Objectives



Series Padlet: bit.ly/MaineSecPadlet

Padlet

SupportEd • 38 • 4d

Governor's Initiative: Building Capacity for Multilingual Learner Success in Maine Schools - Secondary Cohort
Maine Department of Education | www.SupportEd.com

Session 4
April 9, 2026

Peer Learning
Research and
Resources

Interim Activity #3
Post Your Template
Here

Maine Resources

Research: Best
Practices for
Instruction of MLs

Secondary Cohort Session #4 Slides
SupportEd
Sec-Session
Add comment

Considerations for Developing Engaging Prompts
PDF
Figure 4.4
Add comment

Mindi - Peer Learning for MLs Implementation and Reflection Template
DOCX
Tchr_Planning
Add comment

Literacy Hub
maine.gov
Literacy Hub | Department of Education
Add comment

Numeracy Hub
www1.maine.gov
Numeracy Hub | Department of Education
Add comment

Implementing Evidence-based Instructional Practices for English Learners
NCELA
Implementing Evidence-based Instructional Practices for English Learners
Using Research to Guide Practice
ncela.ed.gov
Add comment

Teaching Academic Content to English Learners in Elementary and Middle

Session #4 Google Folder
1. Series Topics and Slides .js
2. Session Agenda .js
3. Considerations for Intentionally Grouping Students.pdf .js
4. Grouping for Comfort and Discomfort.pdf .js
5. Sec_Peer_Learning_Articles_and_Resources.pdf .js
6. Planning for Peer Learning Activities .js
7. Implementation and Reflection.docx .js

Video: Intentionally Grouping Students



Google Folder: bit.ly/MaineSecondaryFolder



Session 1: January 22, 2026



Session 2: February 26, 2026



Session 3: March 19, 2026



Session 4: April 9, 2026



Scan me



Agenda (Document 2)

Time*	Topic
3:00 – 3:15	Introduction and reflection on interim activity
3:15 – 3:50	Describe how peer learning and intentional student grouping can strengthen MLs' oral language development and scaffold literacy and numeracy
3:50 – 4:30	Explore peer learning activities and practical tools
4:30 – 4:45	Apply strategies
4:45 – 5:00	Wrap up, interim activity, and evaluation



Evaluation Feedback

Glows

- Adjustments based on feedback
- Time for collaboration and breakouts
- Practical strategies

Grows

- Send reading before session
- Breakout room timing and structure
- Clarity of directions

Your Feedback

In response, today we will:

- Use a document that was shared before the session
- Adjust breakout structures and timing
- Clarify directions



Breakout Room Discussion: Interim Activity Reflection

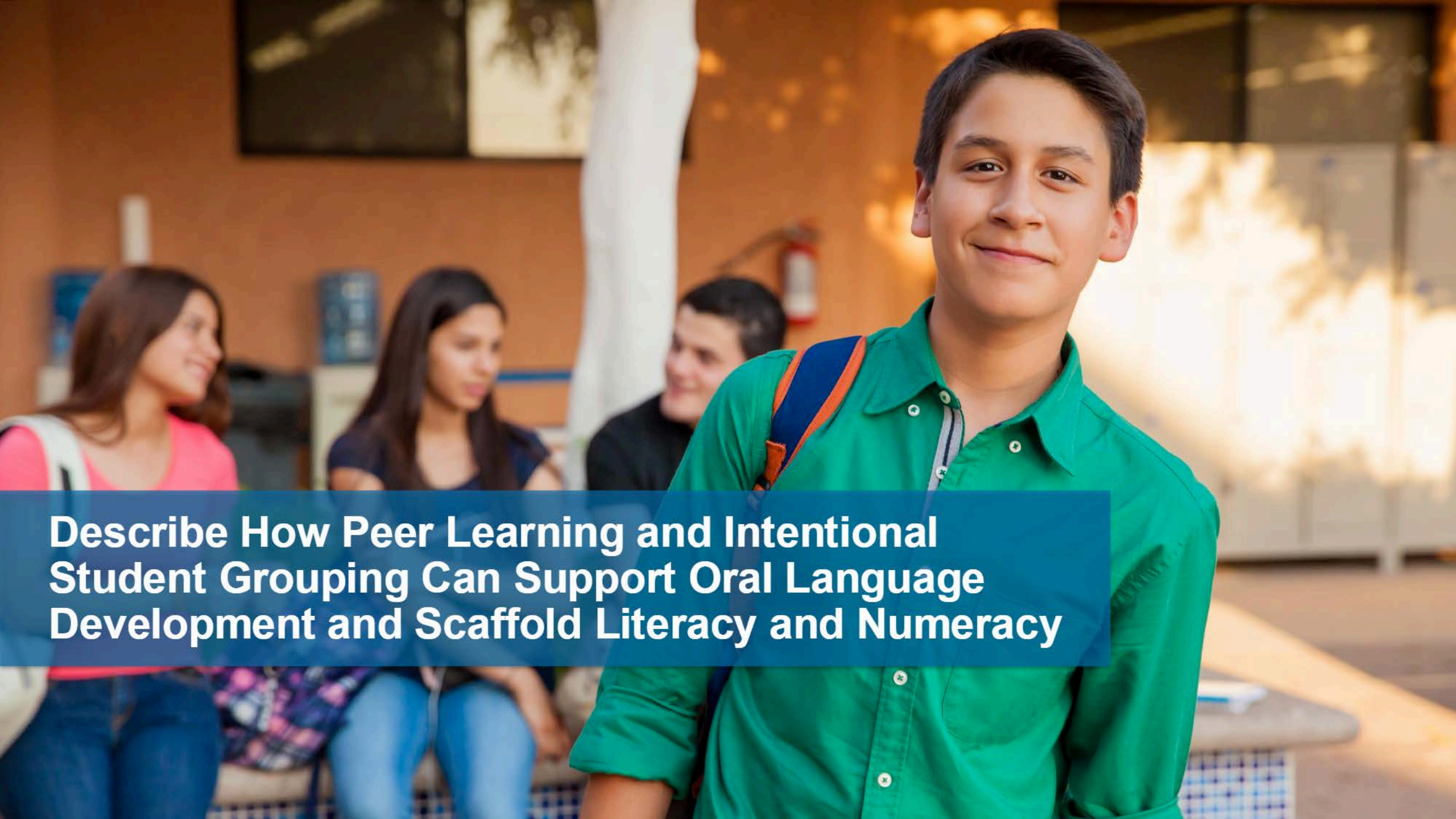
- **Self-select** a breakout room.
- If you are currently teaching, choose a room based on the number of MLs in your context:
 - Low incidence – 0-50 MLs
 - Middle incidence – 51-100 MLs
 - High incidence – over 100 MLs
- If you are not currently teaching and completed the alternate activity, choose a breakout room labeled “Alternate Activity”.
- For eight minutes, **discuss your reflections and takeaways** from the interim activity that you completed.



Whole Group Debrief

Based on this experience, what **key insight about using instructional materials scaffolds** for MLs will shape how you plan or support instruction moving forward?



A young man with dark hair, wearing a bright green button-down shirt, is smiling and looking towards the camera. He has a blue and orange backpack strap visible over his shoulder. In the background, two other students are seated and talking. The setting appears to be an outdoor school courtyard with a brick wall and a tree trunk visible. A semi-transparent blue banner with white text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

Describe How Peer Learning and Intentional Student Grouping Can Support Oral Language Development and Scaffold Literacy and Numeracy

What is Peer Learning for MLs?

Peer learning for MLs is a structured, collaborative approach where students interact to build language proficiency and content knowledge simultaneously. It encourages oral language development, vocabulary acquisition, and academic conversation through peer-to-peer engagement, allowing MLs to practice English in low-pressure settings.



MLs and Academic Conversations

- How much time during a school day do MLs spend engaged in academic conversation?
 1. 0 – 4%
 2. 5 – 10%
 3. 11 – 20%
 4. 21 – 50%
- What are the implications of this data?



Goal of
30%

Gibbons, 2015; Soto, 2021



Poll: Peer Learning in Your Context

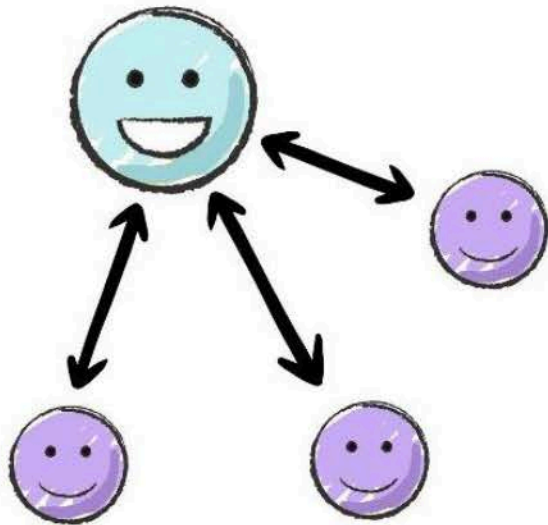
- **Consider** the use of peer learning for MLs in the classrooms, programs, or systems you support.
- How **often** do MLs engage in **meaningful peer learning** about academic content?
 1. Daily
 2. A few times per week
 3. Less than once per week
 4. Rarely or not yet
- What **factors** might influence either the availability of peer learning opportunities or MLs' ability to fully engage when they occur?

Adapted from Staehr Fenner et al., 2024

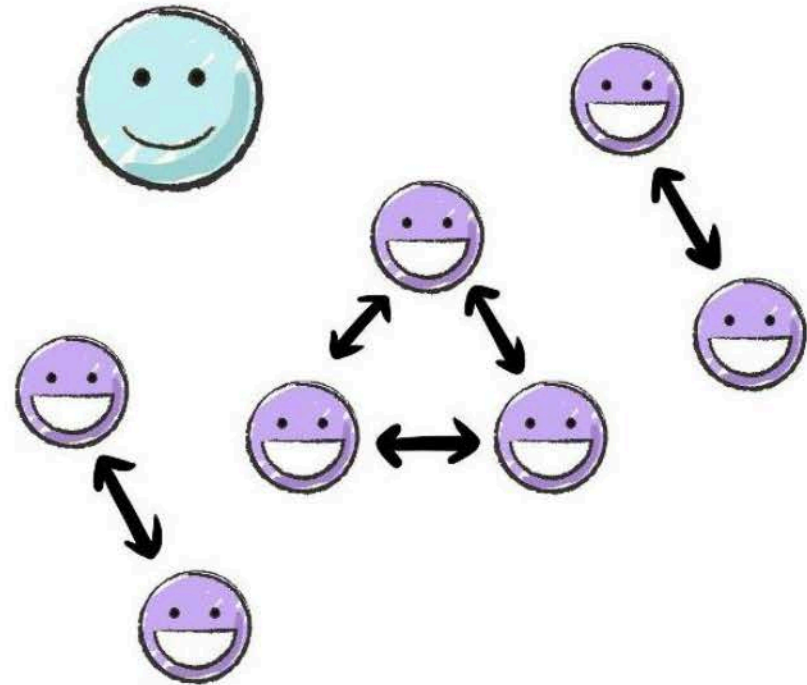


Reframing Classroom Talk

A Teacher-Student Discourse



B Student-to-Student Discourse



Benefits of Peer Learning for MLs



Oral language development supports literacy development in a second language, particularly in the area of comprehension.



Academic discussions are a powerful way for MLs to learn content as they provide meaningful opportunities to hear and practice content-specific language and vocabulary.



Peer learning activities support MLs in developing stronger social emotional skills, academic identity, agency, and voice.



Peer learning activities provide opportunities for formative assessment.

Staehr Fenner et al., 2024

Supporting Oral Language Development

During peer learning activities:

- Include authentic talk and scaffolds
- Develop meaningful and robust language
- Use engaging discussion prompts
- Provide clear expectations and directions
- Give feedback



Staehr Fenner et al., 2024; Walqui & Heritage, 2018; Zwiers, 2014, 2019

Your Reflection: Authentic Talk



Share your ideas in the chat:

- What do you think it means for students to engage in **authentic talk** during literacy or numeracy instruction?
- What would you expect to **see and hear**?



Discussion Prompts and Authentic Talk

Students watch a video and read a text about how to combat climate change.

The teacher is considering using **one of the following prompts** for students to engage in a discussion on the topic.

- ↳ A. Compare the key ideas for combatting climate change from the video and the text.
- ↳ B. With your partner, compare the ideas shared in the video to the ideas shared in the text. Which ideas for combatting climate change are most likely to succeed? Explain your reasoning.



- **Read** the discussion prompts.
- **Share** your ideas in the chat:
 - Which prompt related to combatting climate change is more effective? Why?
 - What supports would MLs need to effectively discuss that prompt?



Resource: Considerations for Developing Engaging Prompts

FIGURE 4.4 TYPES OF QUESTIONS, CONSIDERATIONS FOR MLs, AND EXAMPLES

CREATE QUESTIONS THAT . . .	ML CONSIDERATION	EXAMPLE QUESTION
Focus students on key content concepts.	Ensure MLs have the proper scaffolding (e.g., visuals, glossaries, and home language support) to focus on key content concepts.	Discuss the purpose of the <i>Bill of Rights</i> . Agree on why it is important.
Allow for divergent and personalized responses, as long as they connect back to evidence in the material being studied.	Ensure that MLs' background experiences and cultures are valued and drawn from during instruction.	With your partner, come up with a list of all the ways your school manages waste. Rank your list from most effective to least effective.
Emphasize one or more thinking skills being developed in the lesson and unit. Such skills include questioning, interpreting, classifying, persuading, evaluating, analyzing, comparing, and synthesizing.	Provide supports so that MLs can engage in these higher order thinking skills, including modeling the skill, posting sentence stems and frames, and providing time for MLs to practice the skill.	Consider the character's actions throughout the story. What can you infer about the character's relationship with his grandmother based on his actions?
Deepen understandings and emphasize the essential objectives of the text, lesson, or unit.	Ensure that MLs understand the essential objectives and that instruction of academic language is intertwined with instruction of the content.	Think about today's activity. What does the activity have to do with our goal of learning how plants get the materials they need to grow?

Staehr Fenner et al., 2024

Examples of Scaffolds to Support Peer Learning Activities

- Sentence frames or starters
- Visuals
- Word banks/walls
- Modeling
- Practice with language in advance
- Group roles
- Intentional grouping



Types of Scaffolds

Instructional Materials



Audio, visual, and/or hands-on resources to support MLs

Instructional Practices



Actions an educator takes to support MLs

Instructional Groupings



Intentionally grouping students to provide support for MLs

Grouping MLs in Your Context

Share your response in the chat:

- What **factors** do you think should be considered when making decisions about student grouping?



Scaffold: Student Grouping

- Structured pair work/discussion
- Structured small group work/discussion
- Teacher-led small group work
- Intentional grouping:
 - Academic skills
 - Home language
 - Language proficiency
 - Social emotional considerations



Staehr Fenner et al., 2024

Social Emotional Considerations When Grouping MLs

- Personal strengths
- Comfort using English with peers
- Comfort using home language in the classroom
- Interest in the topic
- Personality traits
- Relationships within the classroom
- Personal preferences
- Cultural expectations

Staehr Fenner & Teich, 2024



Video: Intentionally Grouping Students

As you watch the video, **reflect**:

- What do you notice about the student partnership?
- Why is it important to intentionally plan for student groupings?





Discussion: Intentionally Grouping Students

Share in the chat:

- What did you notice about the student partnership?
- Why do you think it is important to intentionally plan for student groupings?



Tool: Considerations in Intentionally Grouping Students (Document 3)

FIGURE 3.6 CONSIDERATIONS IN INTENTIONALLY GROUPING STUDENTS

CONSIDERATION: DO I WANT TO . . .	POSSIBLE GROUPING
Use this time to support emergent MLs in negotiating meaning and building academic language through interactions with English-proficient peers?	Heterogenous grouping of mixed English language proficiency levels and English-proficient students
Provide students with differentiated materials or differentiated learning tasks?	Homogenous grouping based on language proficiency levels, academic skills, or home languages—each group of students will get a different set of materials based on their strengths and needs
Use this time to work with a small group of students on specific content or language skills?	Homogenous grouping based on language proficiency levels and/or academic skills
Provide an opportunity for translanguaging or home language support for MLs?	Homogenous grouping based on home languages
Use students' strengths as a way to support group roles?	Heterogenous grouping based on individual students' strengths to support such group roles as leader, scribe, and reporter
Consider students' background knowledge, interests, personalities, or other factors that may impact group work?	All types of groupings

Staehr Fenner et al., 2024, p. 81



Tool: Considerations for Student Grouping to Promote Comfort and Engagement (Document 4)

LESSON/PROJECT:		
CONSIDERATION	NOTES FOR CONSIDERATION	STUDENT GROUPS
What background knowledge do students bring to the activity? - On the topic of the activity - On the structure/type of the activity (e.g., debate, interview, etc.)		Group 1:
How can student interests inform grouping? - Students with similar interests relating to the topic of the activity - Students with similar interests in the type of activity		Group 2:
What individual strengths can inform student grouping? - Academic strengths - Linguistic strengths - Personal skills and talents (e.g., artistry) - Interpersonal skills (e.g., time management, organization, etc.)		Group 3:
What personality traits can impact collaboration within the group? (e.g., patience, empathy, cooperativeness)		Group 4:
What should you keep in mind regarding student preferences ? - Friendship - Working styles - Cultural expectations that may dictate gender roles and interactions		Group 5:

Staehr Fenner and Teich, 2024



Your Reflection

1. Independently, take five minutes to:
 - **Review** the two student grouping tools.
 - **Think** about how these tools can help create more effective peer learning opportunities for MLs.
2. Meet in a breakout room for eight minutes to discuss:
 - What stood out to you about how these tools **support intentional grouping**?
 - How can intentional grouping of MLs impact the **quality of peer learning or student talk** in your context?





Explore Peer Learning Activities and Practical Tools

Four Practices for Supporting MLs in Peer Learning Activities



Come to the discussion prepared



Be aware of nonverbal communication



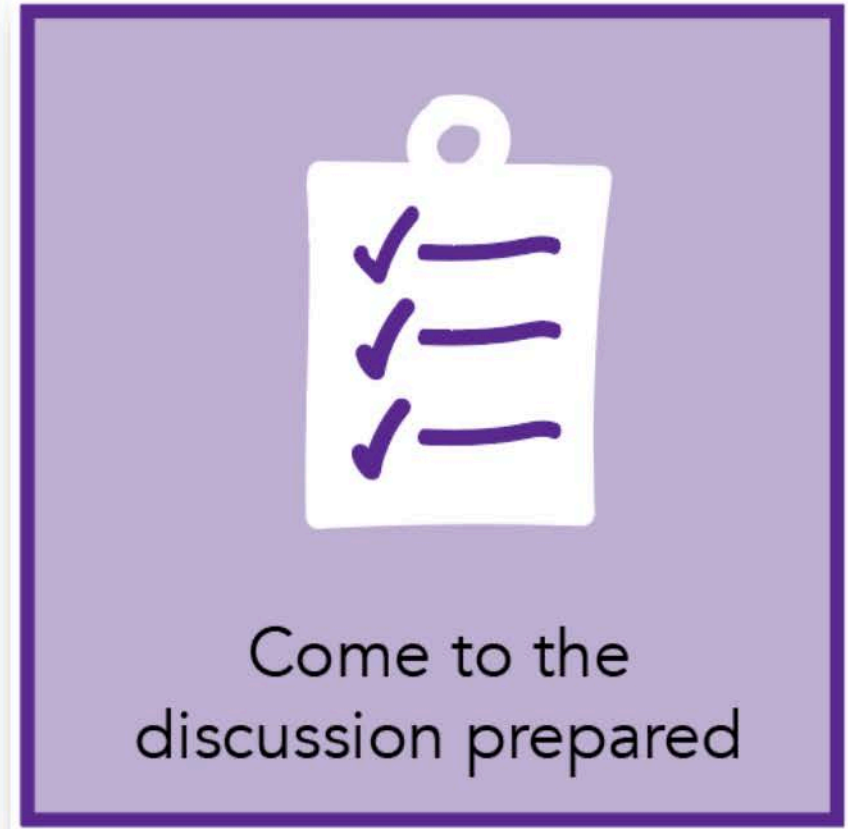
Participate by taking turns



Make connections

1. Come to the Discussion Prepared

- Prior knowledge
- Explicit vocabulary instruction
- Thinking and writing time
- Support content understanding



Staehr Fenner et al., 2024

2. Be Aware of Non-verbal Communication

- Use “appropriate” eye contact
- Face each other with the entire body
- Lean toward the partner
- Show understanding through head nodding
- Use “appropriate” gestures
- Show interest



Staehr Fenner et al., 2024

3. Participate by Taking Turns

- Structured pair work
- Talking stick, talking rock, or discussion chips
- Group roles
- Language for inviting others to participate
- Supporting active listening
- Asking questions to others



Staehr Fenner et al., 2024

4. Make Connections

- Teach and practice language
- Model how to make connections
- Hand signals
- Group and individual accountability



Staehr Fenner et al., 2024

Reflection: Four Practices

- Which of the four practices feels **most critical** for your MLs right now?
- What is **a step you can take** to support this critical practice?



Come to the discussion prepared



Be aware of nonverbal communication



Participate by taking turns



Make connections





SupportEd

Sample Peer Learning Activities

Peer Learning Activity Goals

- Provide opportunities to hear and practice key academic language
- Include opportunities for all students to participate
- Push understanding of content to deeper levels



Waterfall Chat: Peer Learning Activities

- **Brainstorm** as many peer learning activities as you can think of.
- When I say “Go” start sharing your ideas in the chat.



1. Carousel

- Post questions or images on chart paper around the room.
- Students work in small groups to respond to the prompt or image on the poster.
- Groups rotate to the next poster and add on or comment on the previous response(s).



2. Inside Outside Circles

Students:

- Think about or write down their response to a prompt.
- Form two concentric circles facing one another.
- Discuss their responses with a partner.
- Listen for directions for one of the circles to shift.
- Discuss their responses with a new partner.



Teacher Toolkit



3. Quiz, Quiz, Trade

1. Either teacher or students develop questions.
2. Students:
 - Work with a partner.
 - Ask and answer partner's question.
 - Provide clues or coaching as needed.
 - Celebrate success!
 - Trade questions.
 - Find a new partner and repeat.





Resource: Peer Learning Activities and Resources (Document 5)

For five minutes, independently:

- **Review** the descriptions of activities.
- **Identify** two activities that you think would be effective for the MLs you teach or for educators you support.
- **Be prepared to discuss** one of your choices in the next breakout room activity.

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	CONSIDERATIONS FOR USE IN MY CLASSROOM
Barometer: Take a Stand	• Select a statement that students can have an opinion about and is connected to your lesson. • Ask students who agree with the statement to go to one end of the classroom and students who disagree to go to the other end. • Students who are neutral or undecided can go to the center of the room. • Have students find a partner in their group and share why they went where they did. Or, have students find someone in a different group to discuss why they went where they did. • Invite several students to share their ideas with the large group. • Ask if any students have changed their minds after hearing the discussion.	
Carousel	• Write questions connected to the unit of study on poster paper and hang them up around the room (one piece of poster paper per question). • Divide students into small groups so that there is one question per group. • Give each group of students a different color marker and assign them a question to start with. • Instruct students to discuss and write their responses on the poster paper. • Have the groups rotate to another question after several minutes. • Encourage the groups to add on to and provide additional evidence to the responses that are already written. • Debrief each question as a whole class, providing appropriate scaffolds for your MLs.	



Apply Strategies



Peer Learning In Your Context (Document 6)

1. Self-select the breakout room that matches a Peer Learning activity you identified independently.
2. Find a slide with the activity you selected.
3. Choose a recorder and a reporter for your group.
4. Complete the questions on your slide.

Peer Learning Activities and Resources		Activity: Barometer: Take A Stand
Recorder:	Reporter:	
Describe how and when you would use this activity with MLs.	What would you consider when partnering or grouping MLs for this activity? What additional scaffolds might some MLs need?	How will you ensure this activity provides opportunities for MLs to hear and practice academic language and/or push understanding of content to deeper levels?



Debrief: Planning for Peer Learning

- What did you notice about the connection between **intentional grouping, scaffolds, and the quality of academic talk** MLs would experience in your selected activity?
- What is essential to keep in mind when **designing peer learning** tasks for MLs?



Considerations for Implementing or Supporting Teachers with Peer Learning Activities

- Plan with the four practices in mind
- Use engaging discussion prompts
- Provide language scaffolds to support engagement for all MLs
- Consider practicing with a non-academic topic
- Listen in, observe, and formatively assess MLs' interactions and engagement
- Try, adjust, and repeat until it becomes routine



Tool: Peer Learning Activity Checklist



Peer Learning Activity Checklist

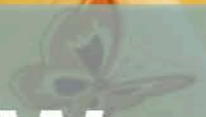
CRITERIA	YES	NO	FOLLOW-UP STEPS
 1. Have I developed a peer learning activity that will provide my MLs with • authentic opportunities to speak, • time to strengthen and deepen their responses, and • an engaging discussion prompt or task? <i>(Practice 1)</i>			
 2. Have my MLs had sufficient exposure to the content and academic language needed to participate in the activity? <i>(Practice 1)</i>			
 3. Have my MLs been taught expected nonverbal communication to support peer learning activities (e.g., looking at people when speaking, nodding understanding)? <i>(Practice 2)</i>			
 4. Do I have a way of monitoring students' nonverbal communication? <i>(Practice 2)</i>			
 5. Have I provided sufficient structure to the activity (including the use of supporting tools) and clear evaluation criteria so as to encourage all of my MLs to participate in the activity? <i>(Practice 3)</i>			
 6. Have I thought about how to intentionally group students? <i>(Practice 3)</i>			
 7. Have I considered assigning roles to students? <i>(Practice 3)</i>			
 8. Have I given sufficient thought to how to structure the classroom so that students can effectively interact and work together? <i>(Practice 3)</i>			
 9. Have I provided MLs sufficient practice and support in making connections to others' ideas before and during the activity? <i>(Practice 4)</i>			
 10. Have I considered how I might use the activity to assess MLs' acquisition and use of academic language or understanding of content? <i>(Practice 4)</i>			

Reflection

- What **shifted** in your thinking today about implementing peer learning and intentional grouping for MLs?
- What is **one action** you feel ready to try as a result?





 **Wrap-Up**



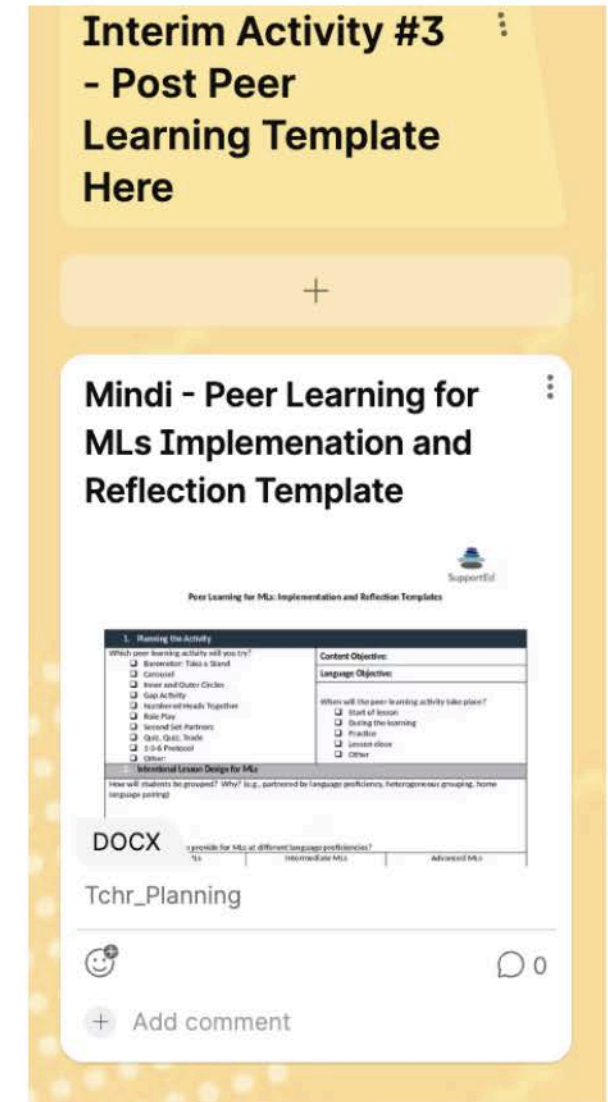
Interim Activity (Document 2 & 7a, 7b, or 7c)

Between now and the next session on May 5:

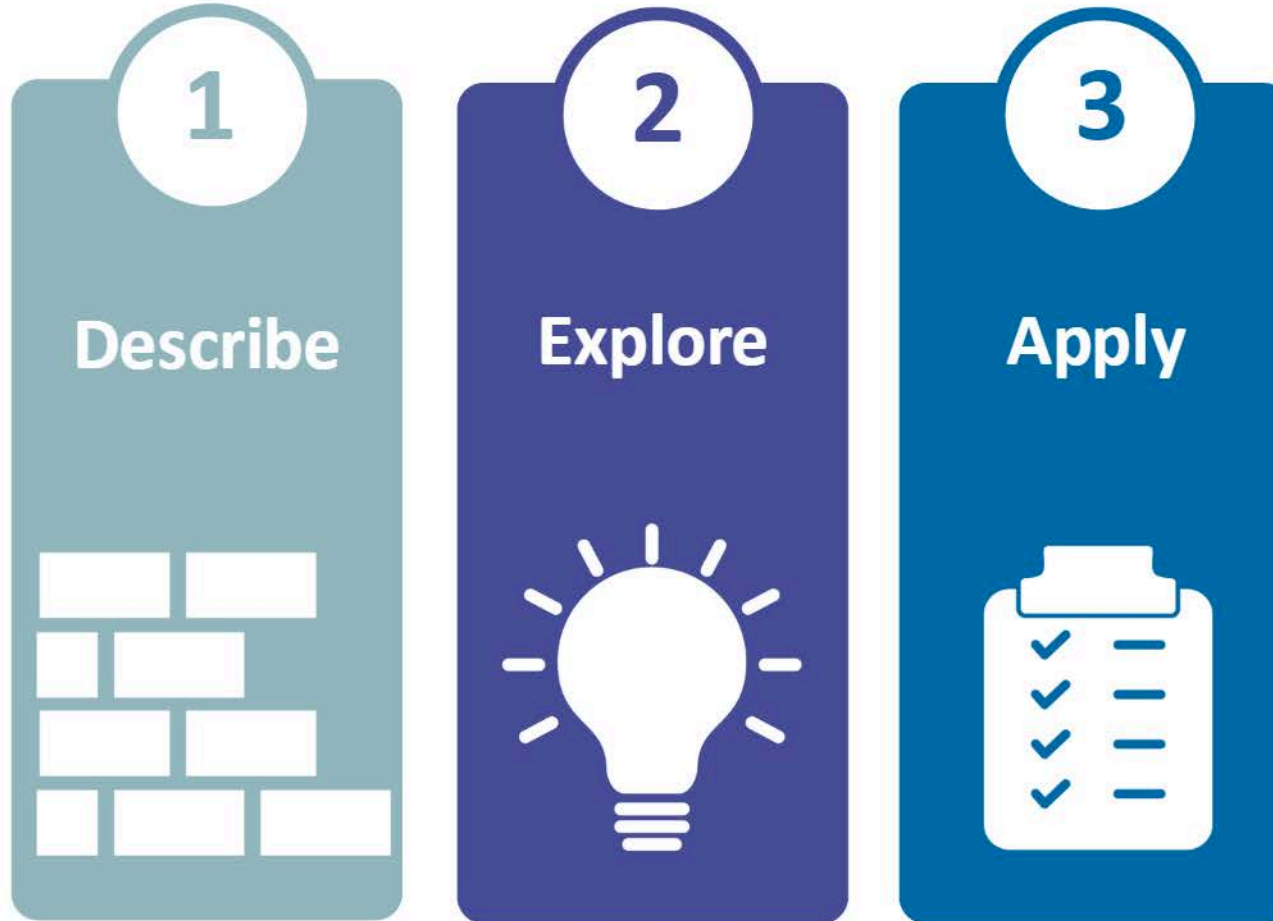
1. Plan and reflect using the template that best matches your role or most resonates with you:

- **Teachers with MLs:** Implementation and Reflection Template (Document 7a)
- **Non-Teaching Role or Teachers Without MLs in Class:** Application and Reflection (Document 7b)
- **Instructional Leaders:** Planning for Your Vision for Peer Learning (Document 7c)

2. Post your template to the Padlet.



Session Objectives



Next Steps

Session	Topic	Date and Time
5	Scaffolding Through Instructional Practices for MLs	May 7, 2026 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

- Before our next session on May 7, please complete the interim activity and post your template on the Padlet.
- Please reach out with any questions: Mindi@SupportEd.com

Reflecting on Today's Session (Document 8)

- Please provide anonymous feedback with a brief evaluation.
- bit.ly/MaineEval4
(case sensitive)
- Thank you!



Session Evaluation: Peer Learning and Intentional Student Grouping to Scaffold Literacy and Numeracy for MLs

Thank you for participating in today's session. Please take a moment to provide us feedback.

* Indicates required question

Please mark your cohort.

☐ Elementary

☐ Secondary

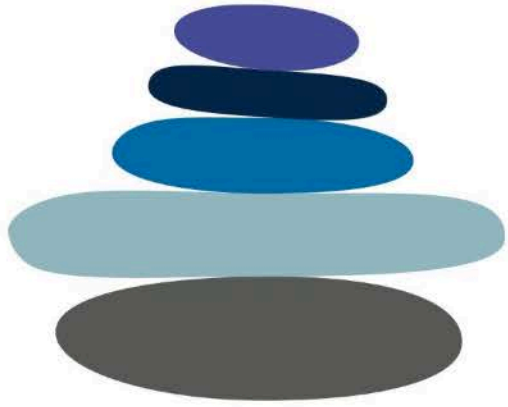
What did you appreciate about today's session? *

Your answer



Questions





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Thank You!

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