Quality Assurance for Language Learners

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This quality assurance plan has been developed for K-12 institutions looking to provide supports to English Language Learners (ELLs), their instructors, and the administrators, school systems, and districts with which they are involved. Previous support packages designed by McGeorge Content Solutions (MCS) outlined specific training plans for K-12 ELLs by referencing existing resources from the language learning sphere and suggesting that an eye on EdTech innovators could help usher in new technological opportunities in online language classrooms, where learners may have traditionally been overlooked or received limited support (Prinsloo & Slade, 2014). In order to ensure that support is ongoing and appropriate for ELLs and all invested stakeholders, it is critical to have an eye on quality and opportunities for improvement, especially since such a large shift to online learning will likely include intense scrutiny with a chief focus on quality (Shelton, 2010). Creating and using scorecard data in ways that are appropriately transparent for all stakeholders, MCS can help K-12 schools identify and plan for the short- and long-term needs of all those invested in the success of K-12 ELLs as they navigate a potentially unfamiliar online learning environment.

Establishing Quality Assurance for ELLs

A scorecard is an important and effective way to gauge where opportunities for growth and improvement lie within or across an institution. Scorecards also provide measurable criteria that make it easier to identify gaps in process, resources, and pedagogy. An ELL-specific scorecard is necessary because "[q]uality is a perception that varies within industries" (p. 59). There is still so much pedagogical uncertainty around successfully engaging ELLs in a face-to-face classroom; the transition to online learning brings this uncertainty—and necessary proactive measures—to the forefront. This means that a scorecard should account for quality both at a

local, classroom level; and the data received from the scorecard should, where appropriate, be considered beyond the classroom, including at the school and district level.

Since various stakeholders have different perspectives or *stakes*, "quality is in the eye of the beholder and any definition of quality must take into account the views of various stakeholders" (Vroeijenstijn, 1995, as cited in Okogbaa, 2016). The Quality Assurance Scorecard (Appendix A and Appendix B) designed by MCS takes into account the supports needed for a teacher and an ELL in various categories most critical to the successful relationship between the two stakeholders in an online classroom. That being said, the data from this scorecard can be used for stakeholders much higher on the hierarchical chain as well, as discussed in more detail below.

The Quality Assurance Scorecard created by MCS includes the following categories: curricular support (including three descriptors), teacher support (including three descriptors), student support (including four descriptors), and technological support (including five descriptors). The scorecard relies on a four-point Likert scale, with scores given as follows: 0= Deficient, 1= Developing, 2= Accomplished, 3= Exemplary. Under each descriptor, MCS has outlined what kind of data, qualitative and/or quantitative, would need to be collected to accurately assign scores according to this four-point Likert scale. Additionally, MCS has provided detailed explanations of how to use data from the scorecard in a way that promotes ongoing communication and improvement in service of the needs of online language learners. The combination of these three elements suggest where changes can be made at an individual level, a class level, a school level, a district level, and beyond.

For example, MCS suggests looking at the "Teacher Support" section of the scorecard (Appendix A; Appendix B), which includes the following three descriptors:

1. Teachers have details about ELL backgrounds and experiences in previous classes (e.g., cultural information that may be relevant to establishing rapport and examples of assignments the ELL did successfully or with which they struggled);
2. Teachers have access to self-access training tools and programs to help them become more familiar with successful approaches to teaching ELLs in an online environment. Teachers are given time to complete these trainings and access these tools; and
3. Teachers have access to a mentor or *expert* teacher as a resource (and/or ESL/ESOL teacher) to help them navigate challenges that may arise as they consider adapting materials for ELLs in an online classroom.

Each descriptor includes suggestions for gathering data (Appendix B):

1. Obtain data by conducting a survey/quiz bespoke to each group of learners, where teachers share what they've learned about their ELLs. Further data could be compiled based on how teachers solicit this information (e.g., higher scores could be awarded for integrating a survey/quiz into a classroom activity versus just asking an ESOL teacher for details about an ELL) as well as how teachers acted upon the information in class;
2. Obtain data by surveying teachers on whether these tools exist, how often they use them, and the motivation to use these tools and programs (e.g., they are required to demonstrate that they have done a certain amount each semester, or it is suggested that they do a certain amount each semester); and
3. Obtain data by surveying teachers and mentors who encountered a problem and solved it. The level of remediation leading to success could be given a percentage or scale (e.g.,

Teacher A faced three common problems across classes while teaching ELLs, and with the help of a mentor, was able to work through them by the end of the semester).

Finally, each descriptor includes details about how to use the data in a way that informs decision-making at a variety of levels, for various stakeholders (Appendix B):

1. If scores are high, move to teacher support 2. If scores are low, stakeholders need to come together to determine how and when they share details about their ELLs, related both to background (including life events that may shape their academic performance), as well as historic and current performance (including any significant improvements or setbacks in certain content areas);
2. If scores are high, move to teacher support 3. If scores are low, reconsider the tools and programs available versus the professional development that is needed. Is this an issue at a district level, school level, or class level? It would be worth looking at programs and resources that other school districts use for ongoing training, as well as becoming more familiar with supports available for communities of non-native speakers (e.g., resources made available through WIDA, Center for Applied Linguistics, TESOL International, or the Texas Education Agency); and
3. If scores are high, consider sharing findings with colleagues at a school or district level. Consider collaborating to publish a paper with results and/or to create an accessible toolkit of best practices for educators in similar situations. If scores are low (or if this resource does not exist), consider working with other stakeholders to curate a toolkit of videos (found online or through any of the supports listed above, in number 2) to help teachers access best practices in an expedient way.

It is clear from this portion of the scorecard that there are multiple stakeholders involved with each score and associated data and guidelines for use. With different stakeholders involved, "transparency should characterise not only the analysis but also the diagnosis, prognosis, and outcome" (Prinsloo & Slade, 2014, p. 319). This is why it is important for transparency: teachers and all relevant stakeholders should be aware of the short- and long-term goals of any intervention, training, or quality assurance plan, so it feels like a team effort that has specific results in mind, results grounded in student success.

Using Data for Continuous Quality Improvement

It is important to find opportunities to "exploit the strengths" (Bates, 2015, p. 372) that may be afforded by an online educational environment. This is where the *Technological Support* category on the MCS scorecard has a lot of potential. Much of this support can be shaped based off of what are called "digital footprints, or digital breadcrumbs" (Diaz & Brown, 2012, as cited by Prinsloo & Slade, 2014, p. 311). These footprints refer to data and analytics that can be collected through something like a particular Learning Management System (LMS) or through other means outlined in the *Technological Support* section. Distance education has the potential to actually lead to more ongoing and reliable "[p]atterns of sensemaking [] by comparing individual learners' activities" to that of previous students, current classmates, or any host of other factors (Diaz & Brown, 2012, as cited by Prinsloo & Slade, 2014, p. 311).

Regardless of high or low scores reported in the *Technological Support* section, it is critical, too, that relevant stakeholders know how to interpret any data gathered. It may be worthwhile to enlist the help of psychometricians or data analysts who are part of the MCS team for subsequent data training. Even the most competent stakeholders who may have significant experience analyzing data should know that "[t]he fact that something 'works' in

one context does not necessarily mean that it is appropriate in another context, regardless of whether it appears to work or not" (Prinsloo & Slade, 2014, p. 309). This is certainly true with regard to very specific populations of learners, like ELLs. Because ELLs are more vulnerable, especially with a shift to an unfamiliar context, it is important that data informs decisions that happen in a particular classroom, in a particular school, and in a particular district (and beyond), so that vulnerable students are less at-risk of being left behind (Campbell, et al., 2007; Siemens & Long, 2011; Prinsloo & Slade, 2014) or left feeling the pangs of isolation in an unfamiliar online environment (Brindley, 2014).

Conclusion

MCS firmly believes in the potential of ELLs and the educators and institutions that strive to successfully support them. This is especially true in today's climate, where the educational landscape is particularly tumultuous and "institutions are generally much quicker to put curriculum online than to develop equally accessible support services" (p. 289). Most classrooms moving online in the fall and beyond do not have the luxury of "cultural readiness … one of the most important elements of implementing a successful training evaluation program" (Barnett & Mattox, 2010, as cited in Keen & Berge, 2014). No one asked for a pandemic to disrupt every sector of life, yet fall classes are around the corner, and K-12 learners and educators have been caught in the fray of an incredibly disruptive moment. Changes to the educational landscape made because of a pandemic-driven move to online learning certainly necessitate the need for proactivity, especially with regard to learners like ELLs, who may have already been vulnerable in their face-to-face classrooms.

The MCS Quality Assurance Scorecard, along with methods for collecting and evaluating data, allows K-12 institutions to feel confident as they move forward into different forms and phases of online environments. No one expects every K-12 school to completely master a shuffle to online learning, but MCS is prepared to help any K-12 institution bring successful ELL-focused online pedagogy to the forefront by soliciting actionable qualitative and quantitative data from all stakeholders.

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Appendix A

MCS Educational Services K-12 ELL Quality Assurance Scorecard

0=Deficient	1=Developing	2=Accomplished	3=Exemplary

Curricular Support		**Score**
1	Content includes differentiation considerations for ELLs.	
2	Teacher tips with additional scaffolding techniques and questions are included.	
3	Course assignments, materials, and activities are regularly reviewed and updated to support ELL learning outcomes.	
Teacher Support		**Score**
1	Teachers are provided details about ELL backgrounds and experiences in previous classes (e.g., cultural information that may be relevant to establishing rapport and examples of assignments the ELL did successfully or with which they struggled).	
2	Teachers have access to self-access *training tools and programs** to help them become more familiar with successful approaches to teaching ELLs in an online environment. They are given time to complete these trainings and access these tools.	
3	Teachers have access to a mentor or "expert" teacher (and/or ESL/ESOL teacher) to help them navigate challenges that may arise as they consider adapting materials for ELLs (in an online classroom).	
Student Support		**Score**
1	ELLs are allowed a safe space (and encouraged) to share information about their culture, language, and experiences.	

2	ELLs are given opportunities to reflect on their participation and performance in class. *ELLs** are allowed regular opportunities to express their needs.	
3	ELLs have a way to discretely (safely and confidentially) reach out to their teachers or administrators regarding any feedback or challenges.	
4	ELLs are allowed opportunities to work with peers in heterogenous and homogenous groupings (with regard to culture, English language level, interests, etc.). ELLs demonstrate success while working in these groupings.	
Technological Support		**Score**
1	ELLs are provided the necessary technology to synchronously and asynchronously complete coursework.	
2	Teachers are provided the necessary technology to synchronously and asynchronously deliver lessons, assign and accept coursework, and engage in and facilitate discussions.	
3	ELLs are provided tutorials and videos in *language they understand* to help them become more comfortable with available technology.	
4	Teachers are provided ongoing training and support to help them determine how to use available technology as a scaffold for ELLs.	
5	ELLs and Teachers have an *established point of contact for IT services* in the event of any issues or challenges, including during *non-traditional* hours.	

**Refer to McGeorge Content Solutions Training "Making Yourself Understood in Your Online Classroom".*
***Depending on age and abilities, this may refer to the parents or guardians of ELLs.*

Appendix B

MCS K-12 ELL Quality Assurance Scorecard, Data, Feedback (Full)

Black text: Scorecard categories and descriptors

Blue text: Different ways to obtain relevant data

Green text: Ways data can inform stakeholders

Curricular Support	
1	Content includes differentiation considerations for ELLs. Obtain data by calculating the percentage of units/lessons that include specific ELL differentiation considerations (e.g. if 100% of lessons include differentiation considerations explicitly called out for ELLs, this would yield a score of 3=Exemplary). If scores are high, move to curricular support 2. If scores are low, reconsider the materials. Is this an issue at a district level, school level, or class level? It would be worth looking at other school districts that have more successful programs and seeing what resources they have. This may mean replacing materials with more progressive resources or working with other teachers—providing that the resources like time and compensation are provided—to create universal differentiation considerations.
2	Teacher tips with additional scaffolding techniques and questions are included. Obtain data by calculating the percentage of lessons that include specific, unique scaffolding techniques and questions, not just the same sentence frames or extra vocabulary you might find in differentiation considerations (e.g. if 100% of lessons include additional, unique scaffolding and questions for ELLs, this would yield a score of 3=Exemplary).

	Higher scores could also be awarded for materials that already include and account for these extra supports (versus ones that teachers create on their own). If scores are high, move to curricular support 3. If scores are low, consider an audit of materials to see how much of an overhaul or undertaking it would be to get the materials up to par. For example, if curricular materials already include ELL differentiation considerations, it may be more time- and cost-effective to have teachers workshop and create additional Teacher tips. If curricular materials do not already include ELL differentiation considerations, this would be another reason to consider replacing the materials.
3	Course assignments, materials, and activities are regularly reviewed and updated to support ELL learning outcomes. Obtain data by calculating how often courses and associated materials are updated, based on a number of different factors and largely dependent upon which stakeholders solicit a scorecard/audit of a program or school: overall numbers of ELLs in a district, particular school, grade, or specific course. If scores are high, consider whether the auditing and revising of materials could appropriately happen more frequently. Consider sharing best practices with other teachers, departments, schools, or districts. If scores are low, consider designating specific time periods for all relevant stakeholders to reflect on their interaction with materials thus far (including how ELLs responded and interacted) and forming a plan to either upgrade materials internally and independently or do a more substantial overhaul depending on the number of ELLs, teachers, administrators affected.
Teacher Support	

1	Teachers are provided details about ELL backgrounds and experiences in previous classes (e.g., cultural information that may be relevant to establishing rapport and examples of assignments the ELL did successfully or with which they struggled). Obtain data by conducting a survey/quiz bespoke to each group of learners, where teachers get to share what they've learned about their ELLs. Further data could be compiled based on how teachers solicited this information (higher scores for working it into a classroom activity versus just asking an ESOL teacher) as well as how they acted upon it in class. If scores are high, move to teacher support 2. If scores are low, stakeholders need to come together to determine how and when they share details about their ELLs, related both to background (including life events that may shape their academic performance), as well as historic and current performance (including any significant improvements or setbacks in certain content areas).
2	Teachers have access to self-access *training tools and programs** to help them become more familiar with successful approaches to teaching ELLs in an online environment. They are given time to complete these trainings and access these tools. Obtain data by surveying teachers on whether these tools exist, how often they use them, and the motivation to use these tools and programs (e.g. they are required to demonstrate that they've done a certain amount each semester, or it is suggested that they do a certain amount each semester). Based on the required or suggested aspect, you could form a percentage of self-access tools and programs to determine how much teachers spend of their own time (I added a sentence to the end of this descriptor).

	If scores are high, move to teacher support 3. If scores are low, reconsider the tools and programs available versus the professional development that is needed. Is this an issue at a district level, school level, or class level? It would be worth looking at programs and resources that other school districts use for ongoing training, as well as becoming more familiar with supports available for communities of non-native speakers (e.g., resources made available through WIDA, Center for Applied Linguistics, TESOL International, or the Texas Education Agency).
3	Teachers have access to a mentor or "expert" teacher (and/or ESL/ESOL teacher) to help them navigate challenges that may arise as they consider adapting materials for ELLs (in an online classroom). Obtain data by surveying teachers and mentors who encountered a problem and solved it. The level of remediation leading to success could be given a percentage or scale (e.g. Teacher A faced 3 common problems across classes while teaching ELLs, and with the help of a mentor, was able to work through them by the end of a semester). If scores are high, consider sharing findings with colleagues at a school or district level. Consider collaborating to publish a paper with results and/or to create an accessible toolkit or best practices for educators in similar situations. If scores are low (or if this resource does not exist), consider working with other stakeholders to curate a toolkit of videos (found online or through any of the supports listed above) to help teachers access best practices in an expedient way.
Student Support	
1	ELLs are allowed a safe space (and encouraged) to share information about their culture, language, and experiences.

	Obtain data by conducting student surveys incrementally throughout a course where a teacher, school, or district includes a remediation plan (e.g. beginning, middle, end of semester), and compare scores across the time frame. If scores are high, move to Student Support 2. If scores are low, this space needs to be created (e.g., through school clubs and dedicated check-ins), and its existence needs to be communicated to all stakeholders.
2	ELLs are given opportunities to reflect on their participation and performance in class. *ELLs** are allowed regular opportunities to express their needs. Similar to how we obtain data for curricular supports, data can be obtained by looking at lesson plans and re-watching class videos to see how ELLs are encouraged to reflect (e.g. learning journals, homework accountability, etc.). This would also be a good opportunity to gather data from ELLs on their own perceptions of their participation and performance. Additionally, comparing grades on assignments and assessments across the course would yield useful data. If scores are high, move to Student Support 3. If scores are low, consider comparing results across different classes at the same school, with the same teacher, if possible. This can help identify any trends (e.g., age, language levels, specific content areas, etc.) and guide teachers as they establish targeted areas of improvement. Consider asking ELLs (in their native language) which activities or content areas they felt they tackled more comfortably and capably and which kinds of tasks or topics they might light to explore in the future and including these

	opportunities in any future development or supports (see Teacher Support and Curricular Support).
3	ELLs have a way to discretely (safely and confidentially) reach out to their teachers or administrators regarding any feedback or challenges. Obtain data by assessing the availability of these supports, along with ELLs knowledge that these supports exist. This could be compared against how often these supports are used and could also help determine if further supports need to be provided (or if awareness of supports needs to be ramped up). If scores are high, move to Student Support 4. If scores are low, If scores are low, this opportunity needs to be created (e.g., through the arrangement of an impartial contact, through the use of a multi-lingual text messaging application like Talking Points, etc.), and its existence needs to be communicated to all stakeholders.
4	ELLs are allowed opportunities to work with peers in heterogenous and homogenous groupings (with regard to culture, English language level, interests, etc.). ELLs demonstrate success while working in these groupings. Similar to how we obtain data for curricular supports, data can be obtained by looking at lesson plans and re-watching class videos with breakout rooms to see how often and how appropriately collaboration is facilitated. This would also be a good opportunity to gather data from ELLs about how often they collaborated with peers, how it made them feel, and how it made them perform.

	If scores are high, all stakeholders (teachers, counselors, etc.) should prepare and share their findings with others in their school, across their district, and even beyond. If scores are low, teachers need to explore and consider where opportunities to engage and collaborate present themselves in classes and courses as a whole. ELLs may even weigh in to share where they might have enjoyed or benefitted from working in different groupings of peers.
Technological Support	
1	ELLs are provided the necessary technology to synchronously and asynchronously complete coursework. Obtain data by analyzing ELLs' "digital footprints", acknowledging when ELLs interact asynchronously with materials, including the average amount of time spent in a discussion or which days ELLs tend to interact asynchronously. Obtain additional data by scoring for work turned in, work turned in on time, etc. Surveys could be conducted for ELLs to share the level of difficulty they felt while completing work and submitting it online. If scores are high, move to Technological Support 3. If scores are low, stakeholders may need to find ways to manually retrieve data (through the use of tools like Survey Monkey, etc.) and even allocate future budgets to LMS or software to gather this data.
2	Teachers are provided the necessary technology to synchronously and asynchronously deliver lessons, assign and accept coursework, and engage in and facilitate discussions.

	Teachers could respond to surveys that solicit how supported they felt about the technology they needed and used. Additionally, teachers could respond to survey questions about their own perceptions of ELL performance (blending #1 and #2 a bit here). If scores are high, move to Technological Support 4. If scores are low, teachers should be provided training, ideally before they are thrust into an online environment for the first time. This would require all stakeholders to explore the pros and cons of different technologies for different contexts, and decisions need involve and be communicated to all necessary stakeholders across a district.
3	ELLs are provided tutorials and videos in *language they understand* to help them become more comfortable with available technology. Obtain data by surveying ELLs to see if these tutorials are available as they need them and if they have the desired effect/meet learning outcomes. If scores are high, move to Technological Support 5. If scores are low, dedicated resources need to be curated or created in order to help ELLs succeed in their daily technological use.
4	Teachers are provided ongoing training and support to help them determine how to use available technology as a scaffold for ELLs. Obtain data by surveying teachers on whether this support exists, how often teachers use this support, and the motivation to use these tools and programs (e.g. they are required to demonstrate that they've done a certain amount each semester, or it is suggested that they do a certain amount each semester).

	Based on the required or suggested aspect, you could form a percentage of self-access tools and programs to determine how much teachers spend of their own time (I added a sentence to the end of this descriptor). Additionally, obtain data by looking at any IT tickets or requests that may have been submitted over the course of a semester. If scores are high, have teachers share what works (including both technology and pedagogy) with other teachers in their schools, districts, and beyond. If scores are low, this training needs to be provided immediately*.
5	ELLs and Teachers have an *established point of contact for IT services* in the event of any issues or challenges, including during *non-traditional* hours. Obtain ELL data by assessing the availability of this contact, along with ELLs' knowledge that this contact exists. This could be compared against how often this contact is used. Obtain Teacher data by looking at IT tickets, timestamps, and response/resolution time. If scores are high, the IT department, in partnership with all relevant stakeholders, should create a log of how and when IT services are used and for which issues, to help proactively anticipate issues that may arise in the future. If scores are low, confines and limitations need to be communicated while all stakeholders consider how to provide these resources.

**Refer to McGeorge Content Solutions Training "Making Yourself Understood in Your Online Classroom".*
***Depending on age and abilities, this may refer to the parents or guardians of ELLs.*