

Improving Literacy Instruction and Family Engagement for Multilingual Learners in Partnership with Strong Start Academy

August 21, 2023

TNTP's Approach to Serving Multilingual Learners

TNTP understands that Multilingual Learners (MLs) bring with them unique strengths and the remarkable power to learn in multiple languages. We know, however, that MLs cannot be considered a homogeneous group because in any given classroom and school, there may be a variety of languages spoken, diverse educational experiences, and myriad of academic needs. We believe that educators can effectively support their diverse students' needs by designing instructional models that harness the power of second language acquisition theory and multilingualism. Language acquisition theory consistently underscores the importance of a strong command of language and literacy skills as essential components for access to college and career ready standards and overall academic proficiency. Increasing the understanding of this reality while simultaneously building the capacity of teachers and leaders will be crucial to ensuring success for all of the language learners attending Strong Start Academy, particularly those who our education systems have most often marginalized by centering an English only approach.

We are certain that MLs can successfully engage with the core curriculum and achieve at equal levels with their peers through building knowledge, explicit language instruction, ample opportunities for structured language practice, and carefully planned scaffolds and supports throughout the content areas during core instruction. We would like to continue supporting Strong Start Academy in creating the conditions to truly close the achievement gap for some of its' most vulnerable students while seeing the full promise of a dual language education.

To continue supporting implementation of best practices that support all Strong Start students, the elementary coaching team supports literacy directly through ensuring excellent reading instruction in English and Spanish. The coaches provide real-time and direct ongoing support for their teachers. Coaches will benefit from an opportunity for regular collaboration and to continue to improve their effectiveness, and teachers will benefit from have ongoing support as they plan and implement strong grade level literacy instruction.

Our Support

Research and experience remind us that a meaningful and focused job-embedded preparation experience leads to stronger retention and perseverance in teachers' first few years in the profession, as well as overall effectiveness. This is especially true for teachers of Multilingual Learners, as they require a uniquely robust toolbox of strategies to simultaneously develop students' language and literacy proficiency in both program languages.

At TNTP, we know the surest way to develop teacher knowledge and skills to deliver high-quality, culturally relevant, differentiated instruction is to engage in Lesson Study cycles focused on language and literacy in general. Lesson Study is a collaborative professional development approach that enables teachers to quickly apply learning in practice.

We have had the privilege of working alongside Strong Start Academy over the past year to support strong, effective literacy practices in every classroom. The success of this collaboration shows in the end of year data (2022-23) showing steady student achievement in ELA. We would deeply value the opportunity to continue our collaboration with the Strong Start leaders and teachers to support specifically with the Spanish literacy components of the dual program to ensure students are on-track with their biliteracy trajectories.

Given the unique focus on preparing ML educators, the areas of focus for "Study" will include:

- Knowing your students through multiple sources of data
- Lesson internalization implementing complex text and leveraging language routines in existing literacy curriculum
- Planning strategic Just-In-Time Scaffolds to ensure all students have access to grade level instruction
- Foundational biliteracy skills (grades K-2)
- Breaking down literacy tasks by language demand and plan for vocabulary supports
- Ensuring cross-linguistic connections and metalanguaging between both program languages
- Family engagement support to continue to build a cohesive dual language program with all stakeholders

Under the guidance of an expert Teacher Development Coach during their PLC time, teachers, along with their coach, will collaboratively plan an upcoming Spanish literacy lesson which they will teach independently later that week. Following the lesson, participants will then spend time reviewing student work to identify areas of success in their lesson and areas for improvement, as well as review observation feedback with their coach. By engaging in these reflective activities, teachers are building their muscle for iteration and will re-design a new lesson with these improvements in mind. Participants will have the opportunity to teach a similar lesson a second time, and then analyze student work yet again to see how their improved practice enhanced students' outputs. This cycle keeps the focus centered on students' experience and develops teachers' growth mindset by seeing firsthand how students can achieve when provided the right supports.

Timeline:

Beginning in October TNTP proposes engaging in six repeated "Learning Cycles." In each four-week cycle, a skilled TNTP Director will engage the teachers in a mini continuous improvement cycle focused on improving biliteracy instruction for multilingual learners.

Additionally, TNTP will work closely with the Instructional Coaches to operationalize the coaching cycles, such that they see improvement in language development and literacy.

- Go deeper in their learning through applications to their content areas (literacy)
- Co-designs and facilitates walkthroughs and calibrate coaching support for teachers
- Creates data collection systems, summarizes data ongoingly
- Plan biweekly meetings
- Develop meeting materials
- Source/ develop resources

Teachers and coaches will engage in a minimum of three learning cycles, during our engagement from October 1, 2023 through June 2024.

Specifically, TNTP will support the following activities in alignment with learning cycles:

- **Six instructional walkthroughs** with coaches (examples of focus areas, but will be determined in collaboration with coaches during the observations and based on student data)
 - October: Language Development with focus on current grade level standards and foundational skills
 - November: Language Development, Instructional strategies (i.e., close reading)
 - December: Language Development, Instructional strategies cont. (i.e., 3-reads)
- **Biweekly meetings with literacy coaches** to plan and calibrate upcoming PLC meetings and observations, discuss progress, share data, workshop PD sessions, and problem solve challenges.
- **Biweekly check-ins with principal** to ensure alignment of systems and high leverage leadership strategies to support the implementation and sustainability of the learning cycles
- **Family Engagement support to include:**
 - 2-3 session for a family listening campaign to learn about families' experiences of language and culture as well as learn their vision and hopes of what they're hoping to learn from engaging with the community.
 - 3 sessions of a Family Empowerment Academy based on what we learn from the listening sessions; topics could include dual language research and knowing their students' data, supporting their student at home in literacy, and how to start preparing for career and college-going.

Week 1 Virtual	Week 2 In Person	Week 3 Virtual	Week 4 Virtual
Co-planning around a common literacy lesson or task during grade level PLC time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Professional Development with continued learning: best practices in literacy instruction with Multilingual Learners ○ Meet with each grade level team during their scheduled PLC to finalize lesson ○ Observations 	Feedback sessions with teachers	Student Work Analysis & Lesson Iteration during PLC

Budget:

The cost for designing and leading professional learning in improving literacy instruction for Multilingual Learners is \$109,000.