# English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) effective school practices

## School resource

### Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

# Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

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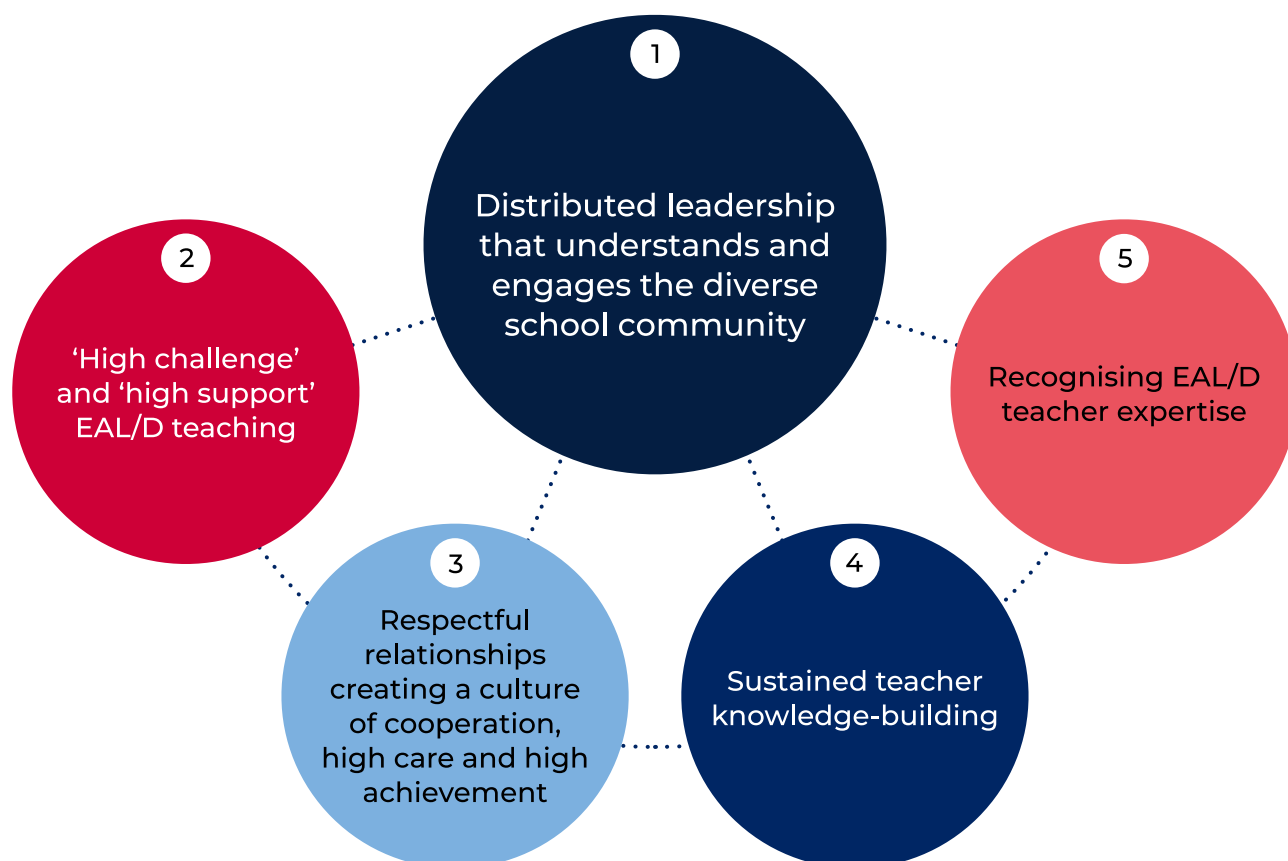education.nsw.gov.au/cese

## Acknowledgements

# Introduction

This resource is designed to support schools to implement the findings from the English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) effective school practices research. The research identified the teaching, leadership and school organisational practices that were characteristic of schools which produced sustainable improvements in EAL/D student learning. This resource provides practical strategies and reflection questions to help teachers and school leaders develop a school and classroom environment where EAL/D learners are supported to achieve to their full potential.

Based on the research, five effective practices have been identified for successful EAL/D education in schools. These five practices provide the framework for this resource. Each practice is described in detail, with strategies and resources provided to support schools in implementing each practice.

With almost one in four students learning English as an additional language or dialect in NSW Government schools, objective, evidence-based research into what works for these learners can make a significant contribution to effective EAL/D education.

# EAL/D effective practices



1 Distributed leadership that understands and engages the diverse school community

2 'High challenge' and 'high support' EAL/D teaching

3 Respectful relationships creating a culture of cooperation, high care and high achievement

4 Sustained teacher knowledge-building

5 Recognising EAL/D teacher expertise

# 1 Distributed leadership that understands and engages the diverse school community

The research highlighted the need for distributed leadership that engages deeply with schools' complex communities and promotes EAL/D specialists as school leaders.

A leadership team that has a shared understanding of, respect for and connection with its culturally and linguistically diverse communities, builds the foundation for successful EAL/D education. Leaders celebrate the diversity of languages spoken by students and their families, understanding that it reflects the many and varied communities that contribute to the life of the school. Successful leaders respect the strengths within students' families, and see parents as critical and knowledgeable partners. They employ bilingual staff to facilitate engagement in school activities, building a climate of trust and community participation that allows schools to more effectively meet the complex needs of their EAL/D students.

While principals are pivotal to the overall direction of the school, leadership is most effective when it is distributed throughout the organisation and, critically, includes those with EAL/D expertise. EAL/D systems and practices function most efficiently through shared responsibility between the school leadership team, EAL/D coordinators and specialists, and classroom/subject teachers. Distributed EAL/D leadership leads to EAL/D-informed whole school planning, coordinated support for language learning across the curriculum, the organisation of a successful EAL/D program and implementation of student wellbeing programs to meet the needs of particular students.

# Practical strategies for teachers and leaders

**Leaders acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of languages spoken by students and their families, understanding that it reflects the many and varied communities that contribute to the life of school.**

- Build a climate of trust in the school by respecting parents and carers as critical and knowledgeable partners. Ensure parents and carers have access to information in home languages provided through interpreting services and the department's translated documents. Engage parents, carers and community members in shaping meaningful school and community activities that represent the diversity of the school.

- Source student enrolment data on the enrolment and registration number database (ERN) to know and understand the language diversity of the school.

- Employ bilingual staff to facilitate student engagement in school learning activities.

- Consult and engage with local Aboriginal communities to help shape delivery of support which engages students in learning and supports health and wellbeing.

- Engage staff in professional learning programs promoting anti-racism education, community harmony, intercultural understandings and the development of positive relationships between all students in the school.

- Build culturally inclusive teaching and learning programs and environments so they are representative of all students.

- Respect the languages and dialects spoken by Aboriginal students, acknowledging both similarities with and differences to standard Australian English (SAE). Ensure Aboriginal students who are from a language background other than English, and who are still learning to use SAE for school learning, are included in school EAL/D planning and programs of support.

- Engage with the Capability Framework: Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners to support planning for school learning.

- Engage with the EAL/D Elaborations of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to build understanding and implementation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

- Promote the use of home languages in school social and academic settings as appropriate and encourage translanguaging pedagogy where students draw on the repertoire of languages to support learning.

- Promote community language education as part of school learning so that EAL/D students have the opportunity to maintain and strengthen their home languages, and to support the preservation and development of their cultural and linguistic identities.

- Use the calendar for cultural diversity as a resource for supporting whole school community engagement practices.

- Ensure parents and carers are informed of their child's progress in learning and in English language proficiency through twice yearly written reports and by engaging interpreters to ensure parents understand student learning and progress.

- Ensure EAL/D need is identified in school planning and that EAL/D evidence-based practices shape actions. Refer to Excellence for students learning English as an additional language or dialect.

**Leaders understand and promote the value of EAL/D education, creating a culture of high expectations for all EAL/D students.**

- Recognise that learning English language takes a long time and that knowledge of how the English language operates will support teachers in teaching language in learning.

- Use the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework as a leadership tool to guide EAL/D program evaluation and planning. Progress through the levels of the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework can be used as a specific target in schools' strategic plans.

- Employ EAL/D teachers with specialist Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) qualifications. If TESOL specialist teachers are not available then encourage teachers in EAL/D positions to seek specialist qualifications in TESOL through tertiary providers and with the support of the department's scholarship initiative.

- Promote EAL/D specialist teachers as leaders in the school. Establish specialist EAL/D leadership positions on the school executive.

- Include EAL/D specialist teachers in school planning, EAL/D education organisation and resource distribution drawing on expert knowledge in language acquisition, language assessment and differentiation through scaffolding.

- Share the analysis of enrolment and assessment data and the effective allocation of available EAL/D resources with school leaders and staff to inform planning and allocation of resources.

- Support teachers through collaborative teaching and/or professional learning, to employ EAL/D pedagogies to enhance EAL/D students' learning and assessment practices through differentiation. Professional learning programs such as Teaching English Language Learners (TELL) should be considered.

- Ensure all staff understand their roles in supporting the education of EAL/D students (page 23 of EAL/D advice for schools).

- Establish regular collaborative planning time for co-teaching and reflection, ensuring all team members have a deep understanding of the protocols and approaches to successful collaborative planning and co-teaching.

- Ensure the strategic directions in school improvement plans have an evidence base informed by current research in EAL/D pedagogy and practice. Evaluate current language and literacy practices to ensure they meet the learning needs of EAL/D students.

- Share assessment of English language proficiency, ensuring both the EAL/D specialist teacher and the classroom/subject teachers are informed about the language learning needs of their EAL/D students through the use of the EAL/D learning progression and the ESL scales.

- Ensure that all staff in schools of high refugee student enrolment, and targeted teachers in schools of lower refugee student enrolment, engage in professional learning which is targeted to the additional learning, settlement and wellbeing needs of refugee students.

- Advise relevant staff of welfare and wellbeing needs of refugee and newly arrived students and implement ongoing strategies for supporting students' needs.

- Ensure EAL/D enrolment data is maintained and regularly updated in ERN to support the equitable distribution of English language proficiency equity loading resources and in support of applications for New Arrivals Program.

## Reflection questions

- How is the diversity of languages spoken by students and their families reflected in our school and classroom environment, staffing and teaching and learning programs?

- How is EAL/D embedded in our whole school planning?

- How do we know if there is a culture of high expectations for all EAL/D students?

- How do we promote EAL/D specialists as leaders across the school?

- How is leadership in EAL/D education distributed in our school?

## 2 'High challenge' and 'high support' EAL/D teaching

The research identified aspects of teaching practice critical for EAL/D learners, including the particular features of high challenge and high support EAL/D classrooms.

Effective EAL/D teaching provides EAL/D students with a clear focus on key curriculum knowledge, skills and understandings while at the same time providing systematic scaffolding of students' language so they can achieve those learning goals. Language and learning goals are clearly communicated to EAL/D learners, followed by carefully planned learning sequences with explicit language teaching.

Scaffolding is provided through planned and point-of-need use of oral language, targeted use of home language and vocabulary development, and explicit and embedded teaching of language and literacy across the curriculum. Spoken interactions between teachers and students are an important aspect of scaffolding requiring a careful balance between whole class instruction and student group or independent work, with group membership differentiated according to the needs of English language learners.

Teachers' understanding of students' language skills and curriculum language demands enables them to gauge the level of challenge and support required to scaffold learning. Effective schools adopt a positive view of cultural diversity, recognising EAL/D students as skilled bilingual speakers rather than disadvantaged literacy learners. Teachers encourage students to use their multilingual resources as part of the learning. They assess, monitor and report EAL/D students' English language development using specialised tools such as the EAL/D learning progression or the ESL scales.

# Practical strategies for teachers and leaders

## Understand students' language skills and the complex curriculum demands to gauge the level of challenge and support required to scaffold learning.

- Regularly assess English language proficiency across all modes of listening, speaking, reading and viewing and writing, and map proficiency to the ACARA EAL/D Learning Progression and the ESL scales. Collect and analyse work sample evidence of language learning and establish systems for regular monitoring through consistency of teacher judgement moderation tasks when assessing English language proficiency.

- Ensure assessment data is used to shape practice through backward mapping and differentiation.

- Recognise that many refugee students may have significant gaps in their curriculum understandings because of disrupted schooling. Employ strategies to bridge these gaps by providing bilingual support or additional tutoring support where curriculum concepts can be explained by teachers.

- Unpack curriculum learning by identifying the language and cultural demands of the learning outcomes and learning tasks relative to the learners' needs, and plan strategies which will enable access to content and develop English language proficiency.

- Shape learning to provide opportunities for students' language to be stretched by controlling students' language output and providing opportunities for students to practise new language in learning. Students at all phases of English language proficiency need to have new language modelled so they can continue to master the academic language required for school learning.

- Recognise that some EAL/D students will go through a silent period when in the early phases of learning English. During this recognised silent period, teachers should focus on receptive language and not force production of language, allowing students to communicate when they are ready. Scaffold understanding and provide non-verbal opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding.

## Build a positive view of cultural diversity recognising EAL/D students as skilled bilingual and multilingual learners.

- Encourage students to use their home languages in learning activities in order to promote learning across the curriculum. Teachers should enable the use of home languages in and out of the classroom to facilitate understanding in learning. Strategies could include use of bilingual reading programs, encouraging students to use home languages when talking their way to understanding and allowing students to draw on their linguistic repertoires when learning in class.

- Challenge EAL/D students with a clear focus on key curriculum knowledge, skills and understandings.

## Use explicit and effective teaching strategies.

- Provide clear language models in both social and academic language learning contexts. Provide worked examples of spoken and written texts to allow the students to notice how language is used for a range of social purposes and to meet a range of audiences.

- Include an academic language focus to lessons by planning for both language outcomes alongside content outcomes, and include this when establishing and providing learning intentions and success criteria.

- Break down learning and assessment tasks into meaningful chunks supported with key visuals and images.

- Scaffold high challenge learning opportunities by explicitly articulating purposes for learning through the choice and selection of learning materials; building knowledge of field; grouping of students; and the sequencing of learning tasks which include providing students with the language. The provision of appropriate language can be via talk in teaching and in learning, and through bilingual support.

- Modify assessment tasks to allow students to demonstrate progress in language and content learning. Ensure assessment tasks use those strategies which are familiar and have been included in teaching.

- Build shared knowledge and understandings of content as what is familiar curriculum content for most students from English speaking backgrounds may not be familiar for EAL/D students, especially students from refugee backgrounds. Use film, visuals, excursions, role play and hands-on experiences. Refer to the ACARA annotated content descriptions which unpack the key learning area (KLA) learning outcomes for language and cultural demands and provide strategies for support.

- Engage students in 'rich task' pedagogy enabling them to participate in meaningful learning through hands-on experiences.

- Explicitly teach pronunciation, stress and intonation in the context of learning so that students can transfer these skills to new contexts for using language.

- Teach language in context to aid understanding. While EAL/D students require explicit teaching of language, it is important not to remove language from its original context and study it in isolation.

- Ensure oral language development underpins print literacy practices to shape both comprehension and construction of text. Allow multiple opportunities to practise speaking in a variety of contexts.

- Sequence learning tasks to ensure opportunities for language to be provided, recycled and recast in new learning situations.

- Deliver learning though 'message abundancy' allowing students to gain access to meaning though multiple sources, including visual, aural and print sources.

## Reflection questions

- How do we plan an effective sequence of learning that is both high challenge and high support?

- How do we identify the language and cultural demands of our subject?

- How do we plan for explicit and systematic teaching of language?

- How do we plan opportunities for students to use their home language in learning?

- How do we plan for spoken interactions which stretch language and learning between teachers and students, and between students and students?

- How do we use the EAL/D learning progression or the ESL scales data to identify strengths and areas of development for our EAL/D learners?

# 3 Respectful relationships creating a culture of cooperation, high care and high achievement

The research showed that taking the time to develop strong relationships between teachers and EAL/D students helps to create a positive school and classroom culture of high care and high expectations. This encourages all students to feel a sense of belonging and enables them to reach their potential in cognitive, social and emotional dimensions of their learning.

Successful schools build relationships with families, learning about their unique histories and gathering important information about parents' educational experiences and knowledge of English, the aspirations they hold for their children, and their health and wellbeing.

A positive learning culture develops when high levels of trust are created between teachers and their EAL/D students and their families. It gives students the confidence to take risks with new learning and to develop new identities as successful language learners. By framing their lessons within a culture of shared support and cooperation, teachers maintain high standards for their students, helping them to recognise their academic potential while also providing them with assistance to complete individual tasks.

# Practical strategies for teachers and leaders

**Know your EAL/D students and their stories and value connecting with their diverse cultural and language communities. Find out about what students bring to learning, including prior education and literacy skills in home languages.**

- Strengthen practices which support the settlement and wellbeing of students, including those with refugee and refugee like experiences. Value confidentiality and know when appropriate support, including school counselling, will be required. Ensure school welfare practices are followed and students are treated sensitively when, or if, they talk about their past in the classroom environment.

- Ensure newly arrived EAL/D students have access to appropriate intensive English support relevant to the curriculum learning.

- Understand the long-lasting impact of migration on all students and families who have settled in Australia. Be aware that changes to students' behaviour and learning may be the result of emotional challenges related to settlement. Seek advice from the school counsellor and/or specialist Refugee Student Counselling Support Team.

- Ensure newly arrived students, including refugee students, are engaged in welcome programs to settle them into school and continue to support their wellbeing throughout their schooling. Refer to Supporting students from refugee backgrounds – what schools can do.

- Understand that individual students bring their own cultural capital to learning. Value students' cultural capital, particularly within the learning environment, and introduce families to the system of school education, including the expectations of learning. Offer bilingual support/interpreting services to families to assist in building understandings about school culture and expectations.

- Ensure staff are able to communicate effectively with parents and carers whose home languages are not English through undertaking professional learning about intercultural understanding and using interpreting services to support communication.

- Include EAL/D student voice to shape school learning culture so that planned strategies are inclusive of all students. Ensure students have access to school learning support officer (SLSO) bilingual support so their voices are accurately represented. When student voices are taken seriously in this way, it positions them as authentic communicators and effective learners.

- Set clear content and language learning outcomes through learning intentions and success criteria. Ensure that these are understood by all EAL/D students.

**Develop positive relationships between teacher and students (and between teachers and teachers) to create a positive school classroom culture of high care and high expectations.**

- Care for your students by building the S.T.A.R.S. (UNICEF) model into school wellbeing programs. Engage staff in the S.T.A.R.S. in schools professional learning so that strategies to develop safety, trust, attachment, responsibility and skills are integrated in school planning and shape learning in classes.

- Hold high expectations in learning for all EAL/D students by amplifying rather than simplifying the curriculum. Provide students with high challenge and high support, differentiating through scaffolding and reducing that scaffolding as students develop learner independence.

- Know the names of all of your EAL/D students and learn how to pronounce names correctly.

- Provide focussed opportunities for students to interact in home language during learning thereby supporting the relationship between language and identity, and enabling deeper understandings of new concepts in learning. Interaction may be student to student, student to teacher or student to SLSO bilingual.

- Include texts from students' cultural and language backgrounds so that students can connect with content. Extend this support with bilingual storytelling to build students' sense of belonging.

- Engage the department's Refugee Student Counselling Support Team to support the school and build connections with external agencies. This may involve extending the provision of counselling support, including by STARTTS.

- Clearly communicate goals and expectations of learning and ensure students clearly understand their meaning. Provide model texts, scaffold using both designed in and contingent scaffolding strategies so that EAL/D students are supported through the teaching and learning cycle.

- Communicate firm rules of respect and expectations of achievement. Recognise that refugee students may need additional explanation about the requirements of school and how to approach the day-to-day expectations of school.

## Reflection questions

- How do we build relationships with families?

- How do we know what students bring to learning, including prior education and literacy skills in home languages?

- How do we know if we have a school culture of high care and high expectations?

- How do we build students' sense of belonging in the classroom?

# 4 Sustained teacher knowledge-building

The research highlighted the need for sustained high quality professional learning to equip teachers to meet the needs of all learners in our culturally and linguistically diverse society. It showed the importance of developing specialised EAL/D knowledge for all classroom and subject teachers.

Effective schools build capacity of their staff through rigorous, evidence-based professional learning courses which allow teaching teams to work together to develop new understandings relevant to the needs of the students within their school community. Teacher knowledge develops from reflective practice supported by evidence-based research and mentoring from knowledgeable EAL/D specialists.

EAL/D specialist teachers have opportunities for ongoing development of their own skill set through targeted professional learning (such as specialist refugee programs), professional discourse and mentoring from EAL/D leaders. Teachers have access to postgraduate EAL/D specialist teaching qualifications through independent study.

# Practical strategies for teachers and leaders

## Engage all staff in rigorous and relevant professional learning in EAL/D pedagogy and practice.

- Evaluate school EAL/D practices using the <u>EAL/D School Evaluation Framework</u> to determine areas of strength and needs, to support school planning and target areas of growth in teacher knowledge and practice.

- Lead school-based professional learning through action inquiry professional learning models to embed EAL/D pedagogy in teaching practice. The Teaching English Language Learners (TELL) professional learning uses an action research model to support teacher learning.

- Ensure all teachers of EAL/D students regularly engage in professional learning so that sustainable EAL/D knowledge is progressed in the school.

- Ensure mainstream and EAL/D teachers who teach students from refugee backgrounds engage with professional learning designed to help them meet the additional needs of these students. The <u>Teaching students from a refugee background</u> professional learning supports teachers to develop their understanding of the educational needs of refugee students in order to provide effective teaching support.

- Include procedures for upskilling new staff in EAL/D pedagogy in the school professional learning plan.

- Use a shared language to describe phases of English language proficiency and the level and type of scaffolding required to support learning. Ensure there are opportunities for consistent teacher judgement when using the EAL/D learning progression.

- Support all teachers of EAL/D students to build their knowledge of the grammatical forms and features of language by encouraging them to enrol in courses about grammar and teaching academic language.

## Engage EAL/D specialist staff in relevant professional learning opportunities.

- Enable EAL/D specialist teachers and school leaders to regularly lead school-based professional learning which integrates understandings of how students learn a second language, including assessment for learning, how language is used in learning and how to scaffold learning for language and content.

- Encourage EAL/D specialist teachers to participate in or lead local EAL/D Connect network meetings and refugee education networks. Encourage participation in the EAL/D statewide staff meetings. Encourage participation in the EAL/D Yammer social network, the Saturday TESOL seminars and ongoing professional learning.

- Encourage postgraduate study in TESOL and linguistics.

## Reflection questions

- How do we engage all staff in specialised EAL/D knowledge-building?

- How do we develop our EAL/D specialist knowledge responsive to the changing EAL/D student cohort?

- How do we provide professional learning that progresses EAL/D knowledge for all teachers?

- How do we provide ongoing professional development for our EAL/D specialist teachers?

# 5 Recognising EAL/D teacher expertise

The research showed that EAL/D specialist teachers played an essential role across all areas of school operations by advising on program development, staff professional learning and EAL/D teaching and learning. EAL/D specialist teachers are key in building community connections and deeper awareness of the strengths and complex needs of families.

Effective schools recognise that students learning a new language need specialised support to achieve English literacy and language outcomes and they value the EAL/D expertise which informs EAL/D teaching in the classroom. Respect for the expertise of EAL/D specialist teachers allows for the growth of highly productive co-teaching relationships. Classroom/subject teachers acknowledge an increase in awareness and understanding of their English language learners as a result of working closely with knowledgeable colleagues, collecting and analysing EAL/D assessment data, and jointly planning and teaching units of work.

# Practical strategies for teachers and leaders

**Employ TESOL qualified EAL/D specialist teachers and use their expertise to support the development of effective teaching and learning.**

TESOL qualified EAL/D specialist teachers bring knowledge and application of theories in second language acquisition and linguistics to teaching and learning. TESOL qualified EAL/D specialists can:

- Assess evidence of English language proficiency growth and need through work sample analysis.

- Lead groups of teachers to establish consistent teacher judgement with the use of the EAL/D learning progression and the ESL scales.

- Interpret language proficiency assessment data using the ESL scales and the EAL/D learning progression to design differentiated learning sequences and advise teachers of the scaffolding required to support the learning of language through content.

- Identify language and cultural demands of learning tasks through backward mapping to the level of assessed language learning need.

- Collaborate with class teachers, subject teachers and instructional leaders to co-design learning, drawing on knowledge of the assessed language needs of the EAL/D learner, principles of language acquisition and knowledge of linguistics. Use this to guide planning in the differentiation of learning.

- Successfully co-teach in classes with EAL/D student learning needs, delivering learning which draws from models of both planned and contingent scaffolding.

- Lead curriculum development which shapes school educational practices, and mentor colleagues in EAL/D pedagogy and practice.

# Reflection questions

- How can we draw on EAL/D specialist teacher expertise to strengthen awareness of the diverse and complex needs of families?

- How can we ensure the EAL/D specialist teaching expertise is effectively utilised in the school?

- How can we build highly productive co-teaching relationships?

# Resources

Refer to Multicultural Education for advice and resources supporting the planning and delivery of EAL/D effective school practices. These include:

- EAL/D advice for schools and the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework as well as advice about a range of professional learning courses in EAL/D education, refugee support and community engagement.

- The Henry Parkes Equity Resource Centre provides access to a wide range of contemporary equity resources.

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