



COLORADO
Department of Education

Office of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education
1560 Broadway, Suite 1100
Denver, CO 80202-5149

Dear Colleague,

As the 22-23 school year commences, this memo serves as communication to make you aware of a change in terminology the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) will begin using when referencing the English Learner (EL) student group. As part of its asset-based belief system, CDE will now use the term “Multilingual Learner” (ML) in place of English Learner. This shift in language takes an asset-based approach to 1) avoid labeling students in terms of the language they have yet to acquire; 2) acknowledge students' first languages and cultures as strengths; and 3) reiterate the importance of literacy and proficiency in multiple languages.

The Office of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education (CLDE) recognizes that various terms are used to describe MLs. The term ML was selected because it highlights the fact that students in this subgroup are not only developing their skills in English, but also are becoming bilingual and biliterate, or, multilingual and multiliterate. *When referencing and/or citing state and federal law and/or obligations under these laws, including associated data collections, guidance, and other resources, the terms English Learner (EL), Non-English Proficient (NEP), Limited English Proficient (LEP), Fluent English Proficient (FEP), Former English Language Learner (FELL) and other legal terminology will continue to be used.*

Colorado educators, district and school administrators and school board members have the privilege and the obligation to provide an equitable and rigorous education to all students. This includes more than 110,000 students in Colorado who are Multilingual Learners (MLs), representing over 280 different languages, and we believe this new terminology reflects the many diverse cultural identities and new perspectives to strengthen Colorado classrooms and communities. While shifting to this language is the decision of the Local Education Agency (LEA), the Office of CLDE encourages districts, schools, and public charter schools to join CDE in using Multilingual Learner(s) when referring to linguistically diverse students. The Office of CLDE will continue to promote and encourage asset-based terminology to increase opportunities for multilingual learners and immigrant children and youth.

On behalf of CDE, thank you for all you do for Colorado’s Multilingual Learners, and we hope you have a wonderful 2022-2023 school year.

Best,

Morgan Cox

Director, Office of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education

