



**MA Public Adult Education  
Professional Development System**

A PUBLIC ADULT EDUCATION OF MA PROGRAM

# Transcript: Overview of MA ELPS – Part 3

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In our final video of the Mass ELPS overview, we're going to look at how you can use the Mass ELPS for planning and delivering rigorous English language instruction.

Here are some of the ways the Mass ELPS can be useful to you and your students. We'll elaborate on each of these during this discussion.

To begin with, the Mass ELPS can be used to ramp up your existing curriculum materials to make them more rigorous. You can use the Mass ELPS to ensure vertical alignment of the class levels in your program by looking at what is expected of students as they progress and designing your scope and sequence accordingly.

The Mass ELPS benchmarks provide ways teachers can address rigorous college and career readiness skills even at the beginning levels. You can use the benchmarks to help define the learning objectives of a lesson or unit and determine an appropriate assessment based on those objectives. And the parallel structure of the standards and the benchmarks across the strands makes it easier for teachers to integrate the language skills.

Let's look at how to use the Mass ELPS to strengthen existing and new curriculum.

The Mass ELPS integrate the instructional shifts from the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education, and these instructional shifts are intended to increase the rigor in adult education and ESOL instruction.

The first instructional shift is to give English learners complex texts appropriate for their reading and language proficiency levels, and as they develop their literacy and language skills, to provide increasingly complex texts that will lead to their college and career readiness. For English learners, complexity includes academic and professional vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and complex ideas. This shift calls on ESOL teachers to think beyond so-called survival English.

The second shift calls on learners to be able to cite evidence from written, spoken, and multiple texts, and not to rely on prior knowledge or experience. This shift calls on teachers to give learners opportunities not only to express their own thoughts and opinions, but also to recognize the thoughts and opinions of others and the ways in which speakers or writers construct and develop an argument or story.

The third shift is about gaining knowledge from texts, specifically non-fiction, because informational texts make up a vast majority of required reading in college and the workplace. So this shift reminds ESOL teachers that to prepare English learners for college and careers, they need to teach not only English language, but actual content across the disciplines of science, social studies, and technical subjects.

By aligning curriculum and instruction to the Mass ELPS, teachers will be providing rigorous instruction to their English language learners.

Here are examples of these instructional shifts in the Mass ELPS reading standards. I'll give you a moment to take a look at the terms in bold.

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The Mass ELPS are also explicit about the critical thinking skills that English learners need to develop. Notice how the critical skills develop through the levels: use information to support comprehension on the first two levels; explain how the information is presented; interpret, integrate, and ultimately synthesize and evaluate.

Can you see how the progression and development of skills as they are laid out in the Mass ELPS can help with the vertical alignment of class levels? That is, teachers can use the Mass ELPS to know what's expected of learners at their level and to prepare them for the next level.

The Mass ELPS also provide guidance for how to support beginning-level English learners while providing rigorous instruction. Before the Mass ELPS, rigorous instruction was generally reserved for learners at the more advanced language proficiency levels.

This graphic shows a comparison of the teaching progression before and after the Mass ELPS. We can think about the teaching progression before the integration of the Mass ELPS almost as two separate phases of learning. One concentrated on developing English language skills, with an exponential push toward the end of ESOL instruction to bring in higher-level critical thinking skills to help prepare students for their next steps.

The Mass ELPS combine rigorous language skills and academic critical thinking skills from the start. That is, they provide benchmarks at the beginning levels that explicitly show teachers what to do at the beginning levels that connect to the more advanced levels. This results in a steady, continuous progression, as illustrated in the more linear second slope here.

Here is an example from Writing Standard 1. Look at the benchmark for Level 6 Plus, Advanced ESOL. It's quite ambitious, isn't it? But the Mass ELPS provide benchmarks at the SABES ESOL Curriculum & Instruction PD Center 2026 | <https://www.sabes.org/> | [info@sabes.org](mailto:info@sabes.org)

beginning levels that are realistic, such as contributing to a class-generated text and drawing on first language and oral contribution skills as needed. These skills can be built upon so that, over time, a beginning English learner will ultimately be conducting sustained individual research.

We have discussed the initial four ways in which teachers can integrate the Mass ELPS into their instruction. The final uses of the Mass ELPS that I'm going to talk about are planning and integrating language skills instruction.

Most of the images of the Mass ELPS in this three-part overview have shown a standard with benchmarks progressing across six levels. This chart shows a different layout. It shows the benchmarks for a single level—in this case, Level 4, Low Intermediate—and it shows a small part of Standard 1 for reading, writing, and listening.

Teachers of a particular level can pull out the complete section for their level and use it as a basis for designing units and lessons for that level. Of course, it's always important to know what's going on in the levels before and after the level you're teaching and to maintain that vertical alignment.

Assuming that's the case, the level benchmarks can be very useful in designing units and lessons. For one thing, all of the skill areas are together, so units and lessons can readily integrate them. Additionally, the language of the benchmarks lends itself to the construction of clearly articulated learning objectives.

In the backward design approach to instructional planning, a clearly articulated learning objective is followed by a means of assessment with clear criteria, and then learning activities are planned. Again, the language of the benchmarks can assist in all three parts of backward design.

Look at W1.C4.b: “Express a clear point of view with reasons and evidence to support particular points.” While more specific assessment criteria would need to be developed, this benchmark certainly gives a teacher a good start.

We think that as you get to know these standards and benchmarks more, you’ll find many of them extremely helpful in designing your units and lessons.

This overview has been just that—an overview. We hope that you will join us, the SABE Professional Development Center for ESOL Curriculum and Instruction, for additional workshops on how to get the most out of the Mass ELPS for yourself and your English language learners.

Please visit SABE’s website and calendar for more information and to sign up for the mailing list and announcements.

Thank you so much for joining us.