

Advancing **ALTELLA**
SNAPSHOT

Advancing ALTELLA Snapshot: Get to know Madison Leech

English Language Development

Advancing ALTELLA Snapshot No. 4

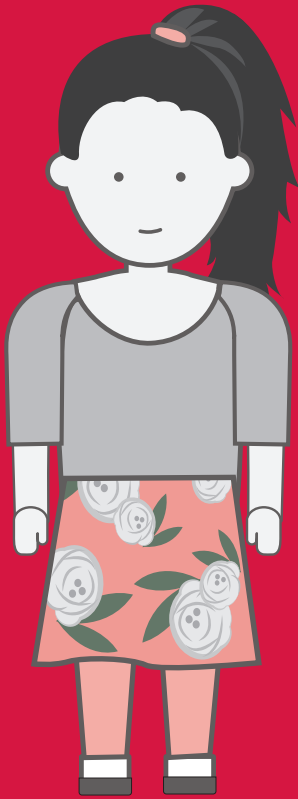
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Delis Cuéllar with Madison Leech
advancingaltella.org

About Advancing ALTELLA Snapshots

The Advancing ALTELLA Snapshot is feature series. Advancing ALTELLA Snapshots are short, informative articles that highlight experts, educators, and topics of interest.





Madison Leech: **THE FACTS**

TITLE:

English Language
Development (ELD)
Specialist

AFFILIATION:

Central Bucks School
District, Pennsylvania

AREA OF INTEREST:

Teaching, mentoring, and
advocating for multilingual
students and their families

Get to know Advancing ALTELLA Expert Madison Leech

Madison Leech is an English Language Development (ELD) Teacher, Instructional Coach, and Community Liaison in the Central Bucks School District in Pennsylvania. For more than 10 years, she has worked in a variety of educational settings with language learners of all ages. Currently, she works with multilingual learners and families at an elementary school.

“I am passionate about teaching, mentoring, and advocating for our English Learner (EL) students and their families and about working with experts, teachers, and stakeholders to make each student’s educational experience equitable, supportive, and positive,” says Leech.

In her teaching, Leech focuses on providing an equitable and positive education through the use of individualized instruction. She uses a co-teaching model that bases lessons on her student’s backgrounds. Leech also includes activities for multilingual students across a range of learning levels.

“If we do not begin with some foundational knowledge and questions, we may be jumping into a learning experience that is not positive or constructive for the student or teacher.... It is important to take the time to ask questions to get a better picture of how to best support each student, teacher, and educational experience,” notes Leech.

Before a new student starts school, Leech interviews the student’s parents and caregivers and uses the Student Language Builder (available on Advancing ALTELLA’s Resources page) to collect information about the student’s language use. This information helps her plan instruction, collaborate with teachers and specialists, create a specific level of service for the student, and set learning expectations.

“In assessing their language behavior and speaking with parents or caregivers, we can get a lot of information about the student’s language comfort level and build growth objectives and expectations from there.”

Leech also mentions, “It is important to assess and observe what language is comfortable for the student. How is this student communicating? How do they best respond to family, teachers, friends?”

Overall, Leech believes, “Language learning is about building relationships and mutual respect before taking action. We can’t look at language learning as deficit-based: There’s nothing to ‘fix’ or

‘catch up on.’ It’s about meeting the student where they are, embracing their identity as a multilingual learner with compassion, and helping foster the toolbox that students need to build language skills in the future. On top of all that, we need to continue to provide equitable experiences and access to basic needs.” She also recognizes that “working with language learners is a special and unique job. It requires thoughtful planning, a trusting relationship, and is further enhanced by connecting with the family.”

Madison Leech’s recommendations for working with multilingual learners with significant cognitive disabilities

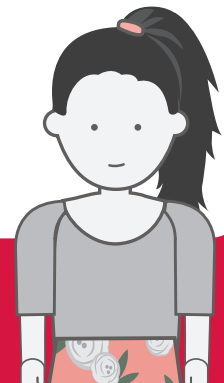
When working with a student, it is incredibly important to gather baseline data—not only in terms of assessment, but also in language comfortability and use in a variety of settings:

- How is this student communicating formally and informally?
- How does this student experience language in and out of school?
- What tools does this student use to communicate?
- What might language proficiency look like for this student?
- How would we know what success looks like for them?
- How can I best support them and help them feel comfortable through this process?

Our challenge as professionals is to adapt each educational tool to make sure that we are recognizing and addressing areas of need and growth as they pertain to each student’s situation and abilities.

Ask yourself these guiding questions to determine how to support students:

- What is this student’s L1 experience?
- What experience do they have with formal education?
- How does this student prefer to communicate?
- Is classroom content accessible to the student?
- Is my classroom accessible to English learners?
 - Do they have access to the tools they need to communicate?
 - Are they seated near a buddy or close to the teacher?
 - Do they know where to access materials and supports (for example, art supplies, dictionaries, fidgets, references, and communication cards)?
 - How can they communicate basic needs to you, to classmates, or to a substitute teacher?
 - Do they know what to do during a fire or safety drill?
 - Do they know where to find the schedule for the day or to find out what’s next?



Learn more: Madison Leech's suggested resources

- **Talking Points:** An incredibly useful tool for teachers to communicate with the student's family or caregivers at home. Also, during virtual learning, I used this to communicate about community resources, daily schedules, and videos for additional practice.
- **Canva:** I love using Canva to create videos for asynchronous lessons, simple posts and graphics for my classroom, and PDFs of helpful resources for staff. I make interactive "Menus" for my students that personalize their self-paced learning each day.
- **Edpuzzle:** Once I create videos, this is a great way to pace the video, check for understanding, and find ways to formatively assess students. They also have a fantastic community resource page!
- **Seidnitz:** This blog features a lot of information, relevant discussions, and links to videos and graphics that effectively illustrate the multilingual learner's experience.
- **New favorite books to recommend to colleagues:** *Reading and Writing with English Learners* by Valentina Gonzalez and Melinda Miller, *The ESL/ELL Teacher's Survival Guide 2nd Edition* by Larry Ferlazzo and Katie Hull Sypnieski, and *Culturally Responsive Teaching for Multilingual Learners: Tools for Equity* by Sydney Cail Snyder and Diane Staehr Fenner.
- **NearPod, Blooket, and Menti for collaborative work or whole group review:** These interactive platforms are fun ways to integrate technology for multilingual learners of all levels!
- **Twitter:** While I wasn't always a Twitter user, I have recently found so many professionals across the globe that are doing incredible work with multilingual learners! Find me at [@leech_the_teach](https://twitter.com/leech_the_teach) 😊
- **Your colleagues:** I have learned so much by collaborating and coteaching in my own building and district—we have so much to learn and gain from working together to support our students collectively.
- **NameShouts.com:** A student's name is an incredibly important part of their identity and pronouncing it correctly and accurately at school is equally as important. The site helps you properly pronounce names based on language of origin or request a pronunciation if it's not listed!

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