



ENGLISH  
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FORUM

# Spotlight

## Fresno County + ELSF Partnership

Centering Multilingual Learners  
in Math Curriculum Adoption

Each district was trying to figure out on their own and now we're aligned on what high-quality math instruction looks like for multilingual learners and it's something that we couldn't have built alone.

*— Meagan Thompson, Math Coordinator – Fresno County*



### Demographics

Location:

**Fresno County, California**

Student Enrollment:

**206,465**

Multilingual Learners:

**34,783 (18%)**

Socioeconomic  
Demographics:

**158,262 students (77%)  
eligible for free and  
reduced lunch (FRPL)**

### The Need

Fresno County Office of Education (FCOE) serves a diverse student population with more than 34,000 English learners, 18% of total enrollment, making it essential that districts adopt math materials that genuinely meet the needs of multilingual learners (MLLs). Yet across the county's 31 districts, leaders and teachers noted a persistent challenge: existing materials often fell short for MLLs, and adoption teams lacked clear guidance on what to look for in high-quality, linguistically responsive math curricula.

FCOE leaders recognized they needed support to help districts understand how to adopt math materials that are responsive to multilingual learner needs, especially in light of California's updated math framework and its emphasis on evidence-based resources for MLLs.

To address this gap, FCOE partnered with the ELSF. Through this collaboration, the County strengthened its capacity to elevate MLL needs within the adoption process and equipped districts with clearer criteria to identify math materials that support multilingual learners' access, engagement, and success.

### How ELSF Filled the Gap

 **In-Person training:** Focused on the importance of centering MLLs in upcoming math adoptions

 **Hands-on practice:** Applied MLL Review Criteria and the "[Math Must Haves](#)" using sample materials to build confidence in assessing curriculum equity

 **Action planning:** Teams developed district-specific indicators and "MLL Look Fors" to guide next steps

 **Comprehensive tools:** Benchmarks, Toolkit, MLL Review Criteria, real-world case studies, Math Must Haves, RFP tool

 **Collaborative environment:** Extensive small-group teamwork and active opportunities for reflection and sharing

## Learning Goals

- 1 Justify and communicate a strong rationale for prioritizing multilingual learners in math curriculum adoption processes
- 2 Build proficiency in evaluating math materials for equity using MLL Review Criteria
- 3 Leave prepared with practical tools and district-specific plans for inclusive adoption

Through our training sessions in Fresno, district leaders learned to define their beliefs about how all students should learn mathematics before proceeding to look at materials. More importantly, they came to see the adoption process as a reflection of their values, not just a purchasing decision.

- Meagan Thompson, Math Coordinator – Fresno County

## Impact

Overwhelmingly positive responses:

**90%**

of attendees would recommend this training

**96%**

said training goals were clear and achieved

**93+%**

agree content was applicable, engaging, and boosted confidence in identifying and advocating for “Math Must Haves”

## Voices from the Field:

- “ The day was productive and supported our plan for math adoption.”
- “ I never had a strong understanding of how to incorporate language development in math instruction. This was big!”
- “ Engaging meeting, all the information was clear and not overwhelming.”



*Meagan Thompson, Math Coordinator – Fresno County*

“ Adoption isn’t just a purchasing process it’s a values statement. This is our moment to choose materials that tell multilingual learners they belong in math. I wanted to stop asking, ‘What curriculum covers the standards?’ I wanted to start asking, ‘Which curriculum lets multilingual learners do mathematics in ways that keep it equitable?’”

## ELSF Perspective

“Fresno County’s commitment to centering multilingual learners set a powerful example for math adoption work nationwide. The energy and openness of local educators inspired meaningful collaboration, and together we laid the groundwork for equity-driven decision-making that will impact thousands of students.”

– Dr. Alma Castro, Director of California Initiatives, ELSF

## Contact ELSF

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