



## Supporting Emergent Multilingual Learners Webinar Questions and Answers

March 5, 2025

*The following questions were submitted by attendees of the Supporting Emergent Multilingual Learners Webinar, which took place on March 5, 2025, at 3:00 PM. The answers below were provided in response as of March 2025.*

**Q. EML is a new term for me. Is this only how we refer to prekindergarten students who speak languages other than English at home? Would they be referred to as ELLs once they are screened for kindergarten?**

**A:** EML uniquely refers to heritage speakers of world languages in prekindergarten. These children are not identified as English Language Learners (ELLs) but may be identified as ELLs when they go through the formal ELL identification process in kindergarten and beyond. Both EMLs and ELLs fall under the umbrella of what is considered as a multilingual learner in New York State.

**Q. How can districts get more money to get more cultural diversity supplies for our children?**

**A.** Classroom supplies such as those that contribute to creating a more culturally responsive environment are eligible for funding under UPK funds. These supplies are categorized under code 45. For additional fiscal guidance, please consult the [2024-2025 Fiscal Guidance Handbook](#)

**Q. Where can districts find materials to support EML students (e.g., diverse toys and dolls)?**

**A.** There are several online retailers and specialized educational stores that focus on inclusive and diverse educational resources to support all students. We recommend looking for materials that represent a range of ethnicities, abilities, and cultural backgrounds. Please feel free to reach out to the districts featured in this webinar for specific recommendations. UPK funds can be used for classroom supplies as such. These supplies are categorized under code 45. For reference, consult the [2024-2025 Fiscal Guidance Handbook](#).

**Q. What do you think is the most important strategy for ELL learners?**

**A.** The focus of this webinar was on EMLs. However, in the context of English Language Learners (ELLs), the most important strategy can vary depending on the learners' needs. Much like EMLs, creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment that fosters both language and academic development is foundational. For resources on working with ELLs, please consult the [English Language Learner and Multilingual Learner Educator Tools and Best Practices](#) webpage.

**Q. For districts with no clear "dominant" second language, what language would be best to use for labels and signs in the classroom? If we did every language, the signs would be overwhelming.**

**A.** Having students who speak several different languages in the early childhood classroom is a wonderful opportunity for everyone. Start small with essential labels, such as center labels, classroom labels (e.g., window, door, bathroom, cubbies) and signs. You may also want to consider rotating supports to build visual representation without overwhelming the space. As mentioned in the webinar chat, you could also ask families to bring in items from home that reflect their culture, such as kitchen perishables, items, books, artwork, traditional objects, or language materials. This approach not only enriches the learning environment but helps build meaningful connections.

**Q. As Creative Curriculum is only available in English and Spanish, do you recommend any additional resources for children with other home languages?**

**A.** Although the New York State Department of Education does not endorse specific curricula, there are a variety of strategies and resources that can effectively support multilingual learners. While the curriculum can serve as a solid foundation, we recommend adopting a flexible approach that integrates supplemental resources and diverse instructional strategies. This creates an environment that is responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity, where all languages are valued, celebrated, and encouraged.

**Q: Is there a quick "cheat sheet" that I could have to dispense to other staff working with my EML students?**

**A:** The goal in PreK is to gain a deeper understanding of the home languages and cultures of our students to better support them and create environments where students can thrive. The Office of Early Learning has developed a helpful tip sheet for both administrators and teachers on effectively supporting Emergent Multilingual Learners (EMLs). You can access the tip sheet on our website or by clicking this [link](#)