**Creating Schools Where Multilingual Students Thrive**

**Building a Multilingual Network in Puget Sound Using Continuous Improvement**

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| “Language is power - languages spoken by Black, Brown, and Indigenous people have been systemically erased in this country because of that power. I believe in centering the gifts of MLLs to directly challenge White supremacy in schools.”  - Nicole Shimizu, Design Team member |

The Puget Sound region is the most diverse in Washington State with over 207 languages spoken and representing 39% of the state’s K-12 public school students. Multilingual students bring a wealth of academic, cultural and linguistic strengths to our learning communities. Yet data reveals the failures of our education system to effectively support multilingual students, with only three out of five MLs graduating from high school in four years.

The Multilingual Network was developed in order to reimagine our approach towards supporting multilingual students. In June 2020, Puget Sound Educational Service District partnered with Shift Consulting to begin planning for a network that would use tools from continuous improvement to support a cohort of schools in improving outcomes for their multilingual learners. At the center of the design process was our belief that our theory of change needed to be developed by those most deeply impacted by the system itself- our multilingual students, families, and educators. The following is a brief journey through our inclusive design process which utilizes strategies and approaches from the [Puget Sound Continuous Improvement Summit Series Workbook](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.shift-results.com%2Fmedia%2Fsqdfio0a%2Fpsciss-workbook.pdf&data=04%7C01%7CJoseph.Anderson%40k12.wa.us%7C5fe96e445dbf41cff58008d8d769d20d%7Cb2fe5ccf10a546feae45a0267412af7a%7C0%7C0%7C637496197898493541%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=bSybQPpVMbSNw2GzOpWmHiZhazjZqQMk2yp%2BliZXzqM%3D&reserved=0).

**Inclusive Design Process**

We built a diverse Design Team that included teachers, EL specialists, parents, representatives from community organizations, school leaders and a multilingual graduate of Highline Public Schools. Over the course of six meetings with asynchronous work between meetings, our Design Team met to study the system, build empathy and capacity and develop a theory of change for the Network. We started our first meeting with sharing our “why” behind the work. This planned short activity consumed our entire meeting and we realized that this was the most powerful way that we could have spent our time. Sharing our stories built empathy across our group, helped us understand different experiences across the system, and began building trusting relationships.

Using activities such as reflecting on the ideal school conditions for multilingual learners, the Design Team began developing an overall aim, or goal, for the Network. From the beginning, members shared a common emphasis on the need for regional shifts in mindsets, culture, and practices in order to create school environments which value the identity, culture and language of multilingual students.

**Network Aim:** Our network aims to center multilingual learners so that they thrive in their academic and personal development. We will accomplish this through fostering school environments where multilingual students are **affirmed in their language, identity and culture (belonging)** and where multilingual students develop **English language proficiency in a manner which values and leverages their *home language(s).***

Along with the aim, the team developed a list of key drivers that would lead towards the aim, and more granular change ideas under each driver that schools test and measure the impact of using PDSA cycles.

**Challenges and Lessons Learned**

Our design process was iterative as we continuously revised our key driver diagram and aim. We learned to leverage the unique strengths of each Design Team member, and frequently broke into smaller groups based on areas of expertise. As we neared the planned launch of the Network in fall 2020, we heard widespread interest from schools but that the timing during remote learning was not feasible. We were forced to embrace the truth that transformational equity work takes time and revised the launch date to be responsive to the needs of schools.

The Multilingual Network will launch in June 2021 and we invite elementary, middle and high schools to apply by May 3rd. Participation in the ML Network will provide an opportunity for school teams to learn improvement methods and tools, as well as to apply them (with coaching) to achieve results together within a community of educators, students, and their families. To learn more or to [apply for the Network](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdocs.google.com%2Fdocument%2Fd%2F10QzAZFuUANRb9td4Dyzwnca4AjdiCQvjxeFa01GHEGY%2Fedit%3Fusp%3Dsharing&data=04%7C01%7CJoseph.Anderson%40k12.wa.us%7C5fe96e445dbf41cff58008d8d769d20d%7Cb2fe5ccf10a546feae45a0267412af7a%7C0%7C0%7C637496197898503534%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=Af7uoX8rqvPO74cCRnHNXo6yH4kvAQG4uHuqmxk43P8%3D&reserved=0) now or contact Karina Vanderbilt at [kvanderbilt@psesd.org](mailto:kvanderbilt@psesd.org) for more information.

*We wish to recognize the members of the Multilingual Network Design team for their hard work in designing the Network, and their commitment and passion for improving our systems to center multilingual learners. Members of the Design Team include: Yushen Liu, Nancy Yi-Cline, Eve Chan, Ana Garcia, Teresa Garcia, Alejandra Cruz, Nicole Shimizu, Daxa Thomas, Ury Salinas, Brian Chu, Angelica Alvarez, Dave Sunich, Liliya Stefoglo, Chitra Bhardwajc.*