

# Collaboratively Bridging Instruction for Dually Identified Students Through Project GLAD®

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Teachers often struggle to provide multilingual (ML) learners with the content and language instruction necessary to be successful in grade-level subjects, while also developing their English skills. The challenge increases when our ML students have other specific learning needs (dis/abilities) that require Resource support. Unfortunately, when multiple teachers are responsible for the content learning, language development, and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals for ML students, instruction isn't always aligned, making it very difficult for dually identified students to apply learning from one context to another.

This year I have observed a team of elementary school teachers working with dually identified students that meets that challenge and provides integrated, cohesive, grade-level content instruction that is transferred between the classroom and Resource setting. I had the privilege of sitting down and talking with Resource Specialist, Elizabeth O'Brien and fourth-grade teacher, Nandini Nulman, who work together to meet the unique needs of their dually identified students. Both have recently been OCDE Project GLAD® certified, and are using the newly adopted Benchmark Advanced (BA) ELA curriculum (See Spring, 2020). In this interview, they share some of the successes and challenges they've had in supporting their shared students.

**Sarah:** We know that educators often struggle to support the unique needs of multilingual students with special learning needs. You have been working to bridge the disconnect between what our ML students are learning in their general education classes with what they're learning in Resource. Can you please share a little bit about what you've been doing this year?

**Nandini:** At the beginning of each unit, we'll think through the best way to teach the information from the Benchmark units for weeks one and two. We look through the district's Google Drive to see what GLAD® resources have been uploaded and then look to see what we could create on our own. Also, Elizabeth organizes us into monthly meetings to figure out how best to serve the students that

are in both our class and on her caseload. We talk through what strategies would bridge what we're doing in class with what she's doing in Resource with the fourth graders, and even how they might tie into her other grade levels.

**Elizabeth:** Because we have this new curriculum that is very rich in language and in stories, I'm really trying to use the GLAD® strategies to help the students engage with the texts and teach them grade-level skills, like finding text evidence or summarizing.

**Nandini:** One of my favorite things that Elizabeth did was in unit one, when we were studying government, she did a Graffiti Wall with her students and posted it in the fourth grade hallway. Her students became the experts on the topic and other kids picked up on it. It was motivating and exciting for all of the fourth graders. We've been trying to find ways for us to partner and have resources like that available for students to notice and celebrate.

**Sarah:** Can you please talk us through the tool you've created to align Benchmark Advanced units with GLAD® strategies?

**Benchmark Advance/GLAD/Resource**  
3 weeks 30-minute groups, 3-5X weekly Grades 3-5

<b>Ongoing Strategies"</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 Personal Standards</li> <li>• Zero noise signal</li> <li>• (Literacy Awards)</li> <li>• (Home/School Connection)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 1</b> – Expert Text with grade-level text
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation Chart (all grades)</li> <li>• Input Chart</li> <li>• Chant</li> <li>• CCD</li> <li>• Picture File Cards</li> <li>• Whole-class Mind Map (?)</li> <li>• Expert Text (Instructional)/Mind Map</li> <li>• Process Input Chart/Chant</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2</b> – Expert text with independent-level text
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chant</li> <li>• CCD</li> <li>• Expert text (independent)/mind map</li> <li>• Processing input chart/chant</li> </ul>
<b>Week 3</b> – Output Strategy/Writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big Book</li> <li>• Strip Book</li> <li>• Cooperative Strip Paragraph</li> <li>• (Reading Group with Cooperative Strip Paragraph)</li> <li>• (Sentence Patterning Chart)</li> <li>• (Graffiti Wall)</li> </ul>

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**Elizabeth:** During my GLAD® training, I developed this 3-week plan to align with the general education teachers' 3-week BA plan. I hoped to identify some ongoing strategies that I would teach at the beginning of the year and continue to use for every unit. I split it up by what strategies are best used for the input piece and the engagement piece, then, as we move through the unit, I include strategies to support text evidence as well as the Cognitive Content Dictionary (CCD) for vocabulary. In week three, we move to the output strategies—getting the kids to demonstrate their learning in some way. So that was the *hope*. Now having done it, it's been adjusted. But like Nandini said, it's really helpful to meet with the teachers every month, or sometimes at the beginning of every unit, to outline which strategies are going to be best for this particular set of information.

**Sarah:** How is what you're doing this year different from what you've done in the past?

**Elizabeth:** It's so, so different [laughter]. The challenge is that before each new topic I do a lot of creating. But the kids think GLAD® is fun, so I'm engaged and excited by it.

**Nandini:** I love teaching BA this year. I look forward to teaching it. I'll be honest, I have a student teacher, and it would be easy to pass it on to her. But, I'm really excited to see the different layers and predict the point in the lesson where the understanding is going to happen. We used to complain that the BA schedule is supposed to take so much of the instructional day. Now I would love more time because then I could fit in more of these strategies and go back and process the charts, or use my signal word more often. The kids get a lot of meaning out of the strategies.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, I feel the same way. I'm definitely spending more time on vocabulary using GLAD® strategies than I have in the past. I've always known it is best teaching practices, but I feel like GLAD® gave me a concrete way to implement it.

**Nandini:** Having taught the same content the year before, I can see how much more engaged the students are and how much better their learning is because they're making connections to the charts. For example, today a student said, "What is a convergent boundary?" None of the students could remember. Then, he looked over at the chart and said, "It's when the plates are moving closer together." That, to me, is the highlight. The engagement is huge.

**Elizabeth:** I've seen a lot of benefits from processing the charts, which can be one of the pieces that is easy to forget. The kids really benefit by taking ownership of their learning and defending themselves if they place a picture file or word card in a different place than someone else would have. They can give their reasons for it.

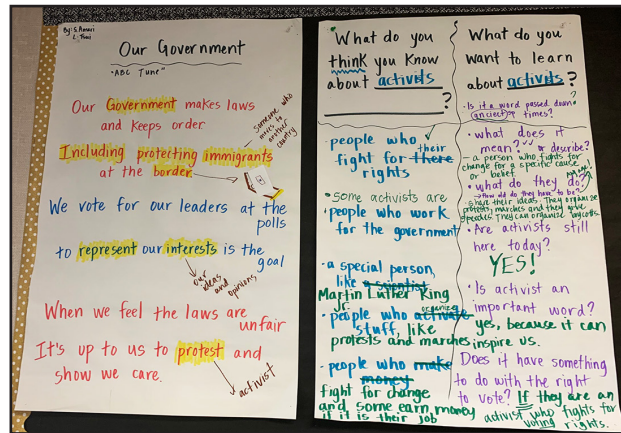
**Nandini:** I have noticed that some reluctant students who don't usually participate or produce a lot have their hands raised and are actively

talking when we're using GLAD® strategies. I often wonder how much they really understand. I find out through formative assessment when we do GLAD® strategies.

**Sarah:** How about your students that you share? What is working?

**Elizabeth:** That's a hard one. Of the three students that we share, the one that gets GLAD® and BA from both of us is on the higher-need end of the special education spectrum. Our hope is that he's being exposed to the same content, the same topics, and fourth grade learning standards. With me he'll get that content—sometimes at fourth grade level, sometimes at second grade level where he is working, and then more instruction on how to use the skills. It's definitely been a challenge for this particular student, and for us.

**Nandini:** It can be hard to understand what he understands. The instructional aide also goes from Elizabeth's room to my room, so she's able to echo what we're both doing. The student is actually quite good at annotating the text, with support from the aide. It's hard for him to answer questions, but you sometimes see that his annotations are related to what has been happening in both settings.



*When students are given the opportunity to add information or place picture file or word cards on a chart, they take ownership of their learning.*

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His main IEP goal is to be able to summarize and find main ideas, and I think he's doing well with that because he's hearing similar language from both of us.

**Sarah:** Are there any other struggles in implementing a new curriculum or in supporting your dually identified students?

**Nandini:** I'd say it's the prep time. I am not known for being the most organized person in the world. I'm curious to see how well I've organized things to come back to next year. For example, I would love more things to be laminated, but I don't prep fast enough to laminate ahead of time or students will receive copies in black and white or digitally because I couldn't make copies fast enough. It's still absolutely worthwhile and it's really fun to think through those things.

**Elizabeth:** I think my challenge is more around logistically implementing GLAD®-supported BA units because I work with fourth and fifth graders at the same time. When my fourth and fifth grade teachers are on the same unit, I can bridge the concepts together and differentiate for grade-level skills. But if the teachers are on different units, figuring out how to support two grade levels at the same time can be my biggest challenge. Planning is also a challenge. I don't know if it's time to plan, or just the thinking through what you want to do. It's kind of the best part, but it's also the most time-consuming part to figure out what strategy you're going to use with which content. I do think over time that would get easier.

**Sarah:** What changes could the district or school make to support the work that you're doing?

**Elizabeth:** I think for me it would be a master schedule that all the grade levels follow. That would definitely help me. I don't know if there's anything the district or school could do for planning time; that's probably every teacher's ask [laughter].

**Nandini:** If we were to follow a master calendar we could include a reflection day. We are often so worried about staying on pace or being ready for testing that we really don't build in time for reflection.

**Sarah:** What recommendations would you have for other Resource Specialists and classroom teachers of dually identified students who would like to try implementing something similar?

**Elizabeth:** I would just say to try it. Get trained, and even though it's not going to be perfect or you're probably going to think of a million ways that it could have been better, just take the first step and start implementing. Maybe pick one strategy first and build off of that.

**Nandini:** There's a vulnerability factor—just be brave enough to try it. Be brave in sharing with your team what didn't go well. Go and observe each other and see how others do it, because none of us is going to do it exactly the same way. I would also say keeping to collaboration time. There's a lot of value in setting aside time to brainstorm and think together.

**Elizabeth:** I agree. Here's a good example: in fourth grade we are teaching a unit about Earth. The first week is about earthquakes and the second week is about volcanoes. Typically, I focus on the second week texts with my kids because those are the longer texts. Nandini suggested that I focus on the first week's text this time because the kids had support from their science unit on volcanoes, so it would be helpful for me to give them the supplemental support on earthquakes.

Elizabeth, Nandini, and their team's collaboration using GLAD® to support their dually identified students has provided opportunities for their shared students to be the experts in their classes and to see the connections between their learning in their different settings—needs for our students that are not often met. Next year Elizabeth will be moving out of state and there will be a new Resource Specialist in her position. How can we learn from their work to ensure that what they've begun continues to grow, even when key players are no longer there? How can we build upon their work in other schools? We hope this glimpse into their successes and challenges in using GLAD® to integrate learning experiences for ML students between the GenEd and Resource classrooms can push us all to center the needs of our dually identified students in creative, collaborative ways.