

## **Multilingual Excellence in Education (ICMEE): eWorkshops for Educators**

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**The** International Consortium for Multilingual Excellence in Education (ICMEE) website provides a collection of free workshops the ICMEE created to make it easy for busy professional educators to learn about how to better support bi/multilingual students in the K–12 context (<https://cehs.unl.edu/icmee/>). The ICMEE at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (<https://www.unl.edu>) is a five-year, \$2.7 million project funded through the U.S. Department of Education, running from 2016 to 2021. The project aims to design new eWorkshops for K–12 educators as well as to conduct research on the possible impact of eWorkshop participation on, the site notes, “teachers’ competencies regarding effective practice with bi/multilingual learners and on desired bi/multilingual student outcomes.”

According to the National Center for Education Statistics ([nces.ed.gov](https://nces.ed.gov)), the percentage of public school students who were classified as English language learners during the 2014–2015 school year was 9.4, about 4.6 million students—a number indicating that it would be safe to assume that educators in the United States work with bi/multilingual students. Improving how to best serve this student population to support an additive, rather than subtractive, approach to language learning is relevant to all educators, whether they are math, science, or English teachers, or counselors and administrators.

The three most informational tabs on the ICMEE website are eWorkshops, Getting Started, and Podcast & Newsletter. The eWorkshops tab has detailed information about the format of the eWorkshops. The workshops are free, they are flexible, and they are password protected. They are offered in three different formats: online, face to face (F2F), or hybrid. The available workshops are divided by educator type. The ICMEE recommends groups of 3–10 educators, because each workshop follows the pattern of “explore, make it work, and share”; thus, to have meaningful collaboration and discussion, at least three people should be enrolled in the eWorkshop together. There are six units in each workshop, each about three hours long. The platform used for the eWorkshops is Canvas. Educators can request a certificate of completion and earn 18 hours of professional development participation for each workshop completed. For 20 hours of additional work, educators can also earn graduate credit by enrolling for an online course at the University of Nebraska.

On the eWorkshops tab I drilled into Mathematics Teachers and then looked at the workshop for Math Geometric Measurement (Grades 2–3). The Essential Question for this workshop is: “How can I support multilingual students in learning the mathematical language and concepts of geometric measurement?” Then the “Guiding Questions” for each unit were listed. This is all the information provided for each workshop on the website. While the Essential Question and Guiding Questions help to explain what the workshop will cover, a short narrative about the overall content of the workshop would have been helpful in making a decision about which workshop to select. In comparison, the TESOL Association’s Online Courses & Virtual Seminars page contains more pertinent information about each workshop available, with a short narrative description of what it will cover, who the expected audience is, and the learning outcomes for each workshop. While TESOL also offers both self-study and facilitated online workshops,

they are not free and there are not as many workshops available as there are with the ICMEE. Though both websites are easy to navigate and intuitive, the ICMEE website is more visually pleasing.

Information on the logistics of setting up an eWorkshop is found on the Getting Started tab, where the registration process is given in five steps. Links to the descriptions of all the workshops are provided. Step 3 is the selection of a date; the ICMEE needs a minimum of two weeks to set up the course. They recommend that the workshop run during the school year, as participants will need access to classrooms, data, and students. The ICMEE states that in general completing workshops in 6, 12, or 18 weeks seems best, with 12 weeks being ideal. After receipt of the request for a workshop, the ICMEE will send information on how to self-enroll in Canvas.

The Podcast & Newsletter tab shows that the ICMEE's first podcast was released on April 6, 2017, and is around 18 minutes long. At the time of this review there are 17 podcasts released so far, the most recent on May 16, 2018. The podcasts all appear to be interviews of people who are in the field of bi/multilingual teaching and research. Some episodes of a podcast are the same interview in different languages, such as German and Spanish. Hearing the stories and areas of research from different professionals in the field offers diverse perspectives on best practices when working with bi/multilingual students; to have the same podcast in multiple languages also emphasizes the multilingual aspect of the project. When listening to a few of the podcasts, it seemed that most of them focused on the background and prior experiences of the interviewee rather than on tips or ideas of best practices for current educators. I would have liked to have more concrete suggestions rather than personal stories, though they did add a relatable component by helping listeners to recognize, and empathize with, the struggle that many bi/multilingual students face in our school systems.

To sum up, for busy K–12 educators searching for free and flexible professional development surrounding better supporting bi/multilingual students, the ICMEE and its website make it easy to find options to get started in that goal. The website is visually pleasing, easy to navigate, and contains the pertinent information: project goals, personnel, eWorkshop descriptions, and instructions for registering. The description of how to register for the workshops and the general format of the workshops is clearly presented; unfortunately, however, the section describing what each eWorkshop covers lacks the specificity and depth that could be helpful in the selection process. There does seem to be a decent variety of eWorkshops to choose from—for example, there are six science teacher eWorkshops available, and there are more workshops in development; a workshop for school psychologists is set to become available this year. The podcast is also interesting, offering interviews of professionals working in the field of bi/multilingual education. In addition to the personal stories, an expanded focus on tips or suggestions for best practices could make it a more useful resource for practicing educators.



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