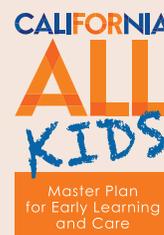


Promoting Equitable Early Learning and Care for Dual Language Learners



KNOWLEDGE BRIEF

Dual language learners (DLLs)—children who are learning two or more languages at the same time, or who are learning a second language, such as English, while continuing to develop their home language¹—account for approximately 60 percent of California's children ages birth to five.² While the majority of California's DLLs speak Spanish at home, many other languages are represented in the DLL population. The DLL population also varies in other characteristics, such as race/ethnicity, family socioeconomic status, and country of origin.³ To be responsive to the needs of all children, California's early learning and care system must support and address the needs of DLLs in ways that leverage their cultural and linguistic backgrounds to promote learning and development.

Strong voter support undergirds state policies that uplift the importance of bilingualism and multilingualism as important assets for both individual

academic achievement and economic prosperity.⁴ In 2016, California voters overwhelmingly passed Proposition 58: The California Education for a Global

- 1 This brief uses the term “DLL” for children from birth to age five in their homes, communities, or early learning and care, and uses “English learner (EL)” when referring to children ages five and older in the elementary and secondary education system. This is in line with the report: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2017). *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/24677>
- 2 Holtby, S., Lordi, N., Park, R., & Ponce, N. (2017). *Families with young children in California: Findings from the California Health Interview Survey, 2011–2014, by geography and home language*. Los Angeles: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. <http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publications/search/pages/detail.aspx?pubID>
- 3 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2017).
- 4 Gándara, P. (2015). Is there really a labor market advantage in the U.S.? *Educational Testing Service Research Report Series*, 15(2), 1–34. http://www.ets.org/research/policy_research_reports/publications/report/2015/jvng

Economy Initiative,⁵ and in 2017, the State Board of Education adopted the *California English Learner Roadmap*,⁶ which declares biliteracy as a state goal and strongly promotes multilingual proficiency for all children, beginning in early childhood. Taken together, these policies reflect a dramatic shift in public sentiment away from a focus on English only and to a focus that values bilingualism as an asset and a strength. Brain development research reinforces that the early years of life present a timely opportunity for developing bilingualism.^{7,8,9,10} So, as California works to support and expand the early learning and care system, advancing the state's goal of biliteracy, how it supports DLLs is a central measure of quality. With intentionality, the state can design a system that addresses the needs of DLLs and their families, promoting long-term academic success and a California For All Kids.

This brief describes components of early learning and care that are critical to foster the learning and development of DLLs, including salient research and educational policy. The information in this brief informed the development of the California Master Plan for Early Learning and Care. Information includes benefits of bilingualism and

Dual language learners account for about **60 percent** of California's children ages birth to five. The DLL population varies along many characteristics such as home language, race/ethnicity, family socioeconomic status, and country of origin.

the importance of home language support and a discussion of systemic barriers to addressing the needs of DLLs. Of particular concern are identification and assessment of DLLs; preparing the early learning and care workforce to serve DLLs; program approaches that support the home language and promote bilingualism; and, program improvement infrastructure that addresses the unique needs of DLLs.

High-quality early learning and care is an important contributor to school readiness for all children and is particularly beneficial for DLLs. Studies have found that DLLs show greater growth in language and social-emotional skills in high-quality early learning settings compared to their monolingual peers, and those benefits are more pronounced when DLLs participate in early

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- 5 Proposition 58 amends Proposition 227 by moving beyond improvement efforts focused solely on language of instruction to programs and pathways that effectively develop academic content knowledge, discipline-specific practices, academic language uses, and bilingual-biliterate proficiency.
 - 6 For more information on the *California English Learner Roadmap: Strengthening Comprehensive Educational Policies, Programs, and Practices for English Learners (CA EL Roadmap)*, visit <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/rm/>
 - 7 Conboy, B. T., & Mills, D. L. (2006). Two languages, one developing brain: Event-related potentials to words in bilingual toddlers. *Developmental Science*, 9(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7687.2005.00453.x>
 - 8 Garcia-Sierra, A., Rivera-Gaxiola, M., Percaccio, C. R., Conboy, B. T., Romo, H., Klarman, L., Ortis, S., & Kuhl, P. K. (2011). Bilingual language learning: An ERP study relating early brain responses to speech, language input, and later word production. *Journal of Phonetics*, 39(4), 546–557. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wocn.2011.07.002>
 - 9 Giroud, N., Baum, S. R., Gilbert, A. C., Phillips, N. A., & Gracco, V. (2020). Earlier age of second language learning induces more robust speech encoding in the auditory brainstem in adults, independent of amount of language exposure during early childhood. *Brain and Language*, 207, 104815. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bandl.2020.104815>
 - 10 Kuhl, P., & Rivera-Gaxiola, M. (2008). Neural substrates of language acquisition. *Annual Review of Neuroscience*, 31(1), 511–534. <http://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.neuro.30.051606.094321>

learning opportunities for longer periods of time.^{11,12,13}

Despite gains in academic outcomes measured in English during preschool, at kindergarten entry, DLLs who are not yet proficient in English score lower on academic skills measured in English compared to their monolingual, English-speaking peers.^{14,15} It is important to note, however, that DLLs who are proficient in English at kindergarten entry show academic gains in line with non-DLL peers. In the later grades, significant numbers of long-term English learners (ELs)—children who are still identified as ELs after six or more years of instruction—do not meet or exceed the English language arts standards. These long-term ELs are

also more likely to have lower rates of high school graduation compared to all students.^{16,17} Presently, many DLLs and ELs are left behind due to inadequacies in the early learning and K–12 educational systems,¹⁸ which will likely only be exacerbated due to the COVID-19 pandemic.^{19,20,21}

Benefits of Bilingualism and Importance of Home Language Support

As California educational policies shift toward understanding the importance of supporting a child’s home language and increasing opportunities for children to participate in dual language

- 11 Espinosa, L. M. (2013). *Early education for dual language learners: Promoting school readiness and early school success*. Migration Policy Institute. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/COI-EspinosaFINAL.pdf>
- 12 Buysse, V., Peisner-Feinberg, E., Pérez, M., Hammer, C. S., & Knowles, M. (2014). Effects of early education programs and practices on the development and learning of dual language learners: A review of the literature. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29(4), 765–785. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2013.08.004>
- 13 Yazejian, N., Bryant, D., Freel, K., Burchinal, M., & Educare Learning Network (ELN) Investigative Team. (2015). High quality early education: Age of entry and time in care, differences in student outcomes for English-only and dual language learners. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 31(4), 23–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2015.02.002>
- 14 Han, W.-J., Lee, R., & Waldfogel, J. (2012). School readiness among children of immigrants in the US: Evidence from a large national birth cohort study. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(4), 771–782.
- 15 Espinosa, L. M. (2020). *Getting it right: Using implementation research to improve outcomes in early care and education*. Foundation for Child Development. https://www.fcd-us.org/assets/2020/06/GettingitRight_UsingImplementationResearchtoImproveOutcomesinECE_2020.pdf
- 16 Sugarman, J., & Geary, C. (2018). *English learners in California: Demographics, outcomes and state accountability policies*. Migration Policy Institute. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/EL-factsheet2018-California_Final.pdf
- 17 For more information on California student achievement data, visit <https://caaspp-elpac.cde.ca.gov/caaspp/Default>
- 18 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (2017).
- 19 American Institutes for Research & Early Edge California. (2020). *A system in jeopardy: California’s early learning system and its dual language learners during the Covid-19 pandemic*. <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/A-System-in-Jeopardy-COVID-DLLs-September-2020.pdf>
- 20 Kuhfeld, M., Soland, J., Tarasawa, B., Johnson, A., Ruzek, E., & Liu, J. (2020). Projecting the potential impacts of COVID-19 school closures on academic achievement. *Educational Researcher*, 49(8), 549–565. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X20965918>
- 21 Zepeda, M., Crolotte, C., Doh, J., & Ramos, V. R. (2020). *COVID-19 rapid response: Urgent needs of dual language learner children and families*. Early Edge. <https://earlyedgecalifornia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/COVID-19-Rapid-Response-Urgent-Needs-of-Dual-Language-Learners.pdf>

programs,²² studies on the development of bilingualism elevate the importance of the early years as foundational to long-term academic success. Research on the relationship between language development and infant brain development has found that learning a second language increases gray-matter density.²³ Bilingualism enhances self-regulation²⁴ and executive-function skills, including flexibility in thinking skills, such as the ability to focus attention when presented with confusing information or selecting relevant information over irrelevant information.^{25,26,27} Research also indicates that continuing to use and develop the home language carries a variety of benefits, including enhanced cognitive and academic skills; stronger ties with family, culture, and community, which are critical for building a healthy identity; and, the professional and economic benefits of

being able to communicate in more than one language.^{28,29,30,31}

The bilingual advantage includes:

- enhanced cognitive and academic skills;
- stronger ties with family, culture, and community; and
- professional and economic benefits.

The benefits of bilingualism are realized when children participate in educational programs that support and maintain their home language and provide opportunities to learn English. For school-age children, research shows that high-quality dual language education programs best support the long-term academic

- 22 When discussing research findings regarding dual language programs, this brief uses the term as defined in the cited study (e.g., bilingual program, two-language program, dual language education, etc.). In general, dual language programs aim to develop proficiency in two or more languages. Dual language immersion and two-way (bilingual) immersion include DLLs/ELs who speak a common home language and non-DLL/EL students. Instruction is in two languages, subject to variation by the quantity of time and subject matter. These models typically serve children in elementary school and at times into middle and high school. Some models have been adapted for use in preschool. For a comprehensive discussion of program models, see California Department of Education (2020). *Improving education for multilingual and English learner students*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/improvingmleeducation.asp>
- 23 Mechelli, A., Crinion, J. T., Noppeney, U., O'Doherty, J., Ashburner, J., Frackowiak, R. S., & Price, C. J. (2004). Structural plasticity in the bilingual brain. *Nature*, 431(7010), 757. <http://doi.org/10.1038/431757a>
- 24 Halle, T. G., Whittaker, J. V., Zepeda, M., Rothenberg, L., Anderson, R., Daneri, P., Wessel, J., & Buysse, V. (2014). The social-emotional development of dual language learners: Looking back at existing research and moving forward with purpose. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29(4), 734–749. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2013.12.002>
- 25 Barac, R., Bialystok, E., Castro, D. C., & Sanchez, M. (2014). The cognitive development of young dual language learners: A critical review. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29(4), 699–714. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ce/documents/dllresearchpapers.pdf>
- 26 Adesope, O. O., Lavin, T., Thompson, T., & Ungerleider, C. (2010). A systematic review and meta-analysis of the cognitive correlates of bilingualism. *Review of Educational Research*, 80(2), 207–245. <http://doi.org/10.3102/0034654310368803>
- 27 Sandhofer, C. & Uchikoshi, Y. (2013). Cognitive consequences of dual language learning: Cognitive function, language and literacy, science and mathematics, and social-emotional development. In Governor's State Advisory Council on Early Learning and Care, *California's Best Practices for Young Dual Language Learners: Research Overview Papers* (pp. 51–89). Sacramento: CDE Press. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ce/documents/dllresearchpapers.pdf>
- 28 Callahan, R. M., & Gándara, P. C. (Eds.). (2014). *The bilingual advantage: Language, literacy and the US labor market*. Multilingual Matters.
- 29 Gándara (2015).
- 30 Barac et al. (2014).
- 31 Rumbaut, R. G. (2014). English plus: Exploring the socioeconomic benefits of bilingualism in Southern California. In R. M. Callahan & P. C. Gándara (Eds.), *The bilingual advantage: Language, literacy, and the labor market*. Multilingual Matters.

success and social-emotional development of DLLs.³² A longitudinal study in a large urban California school district demonstrated that participating in two-language programs benefited ELs as much as, or more than, English immersion for long-term academic and English proficiency outcomes.^{33,34} Another longitudinal study that randomly assigned ELs to a dual language immersion classroom in pre-kindergarten or kindergarten found that ELs outperformed their peers in English reading in grades 5 and 8, and were more likely to become proficient in English.³⁵ In preschool, there is evidence that the dual language model is associated with greater oral language proficiency growth across the school year in both English and Spanish.³⁶ Other research has found that participation in a two-way bilingual program does not diminish the development of English among DLL children during the preschool years, while still maintaining a child's home language.³⁷

Research also suggests that the use of home language in early childhood classrooms can have a positive effect on DLLs' social-emotional

development.³⁸ Further, researchers found that the more frequently educators speak to children in the children's home languages, the more likely educators are to interact with the children, and the more likely the educators are to view the children's behavior in a positive light.³⁹ As highlighted in the *California English Learner Roadmap*, a positive school climate is foundational to creating a safe and affirming environment in which to learn, and a critical feature of a positive school climate is establishing and strengthening partnerships with families.⁴⁰ DLL families provide a critical link to a child's culture and play a crucial role in maintaining the home language.⁴¹ Authentic,

Authentic, bidirectional communication with families provides early educators with a comprehensive understanding of each child's background and behavior. Meaningful partnerships between early educators and families can foster children's learning and development in ways that promote the home language and bilingualism as assets.

- 32 Collier, V. P., & Thomas, W. P. (2017). Validating the power of bilingual schooling: Thirty-two years of large-scale, longitudinal research. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 27, 203–217.
- 33 Umansky, I. M., Valentino, R. A., & Reardon, S. F. (2016). The promise of two language education. *Educational Leadership*, 73, 10–17.
- 34 Umansky, I.M. & Reardon, S. (2014). Reclassification patterns among Latino English learner students in bilingual, dual immersion, and English immersion classrooms. *American Educational Research Journal*, 51(5), 879–912. doi:[10.3102/0002831214545110](https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831214545110)
- 35 Steele, J. L., Slater, R. O., Zamarro, G., Miller, T., Li, J., Burkhauser, S., & Bacon, M. (2017). Effects of dual-language immersion programs on student achievement: Evidence from lottery data. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1 suppl.). doi.org/[10.3102/0002831216634463](https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216634463)
- 36 Oliva-Olson, C. (2019). *Dos métodos: Two classroom language models in Head Start*. Urban Institute. https://www.urban.org/research/publication/dos-metodos-two-classroom-language-models-head-start/view/full_report
- 37 Barnett, W. S., Yarosz, D. J., Thomas, J., & Blanco, D. (2007) Two-way and monolingual English immersion in preschool education: An experimental comparison. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 22(3), 277–293. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.03.003>
- 38 Halle et al. (2014).
- 39 Chang, F., Crawford, G., Early, D., Bryant, D., Howes, C., Burchinal, M., & Pianta, R. (2007). Spanish-speaking children's social and language development in pre-kindergarten classrooms. *Early Education and Development*, 18(2), 243–269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409280701282959>
- 40 California Department of Education. (n.d.) *California English Learner Roadmap*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/rm/>
- 41 Schofield, T., Beaumont, K., Widaman, K., Jochem, R., Robins, R., & Conger, R. (2012). Parent and child fluency in a common language: Implications for the parent-child relationship and later academic success in Mexican American families. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 26(6), 869–79. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030423>

bidirectional communication with families provides early educators with a comprehensive understanding of each child's background and behavior. Meaningful partnerships between early educators and families can foster children's learning and development in ways that promote the home language and bilingualism as assets. This is especially important given the documented trend of home-language loss for DLLs in the United States as they move through the educational system.^{42,43} Furthermore, strengthening a DLL family's relationship to early learning and care programs provides a foundation for the parent-school relationship that can help with a child's future learning.^{44,45,46,47} All areas of early learning and care should strive for meaningful partnerships with DLL families, incorporating the families' priorities for their children's learning and development.

Systemic Barriers to Addressing the Needs of DLLs

Early learning and care that leverages DLLs' home languages as an asset is critical to fostering bilingualism, biliteracy, and long-term academic achievement. Despite the growing evidence of the benefits of bilingualism, California's current

infrastructure for early learning and care falls short in providing the necessary supports to DLL children and their families. A recent report on the early findings from the First 5 California DLL Pilot Study cited a lack of coherence and integration of efforts and resources across systems, counties, and the state as a significant obstacle to consistent implementation of practices that support DLLs.⁴⁸ The report lists the following systemic barriers to improvement: (1) identification, assessment, and progress monitoring on language development for DLLs varies by funding stream and is limited by a lack of DLL-specific measures and tools to monitor instruction and learning; (2) universal requirements for providers, focusing on a foundational understanding of language acquisition and best practices for serving DLLs, are not required in early childhood educator preparation programs; and, (3) programs and providers face limitations in resources and capacity to serve DLLs, such as a shortage of bilingual staff, inadequate pay for teachers and caregivers, and limited availability of culturally and linguistically responsive instructional resources and materials.

A report by the Children's Equity Project similarly found significant systemic obstacles to better

42 Anderson, R. T. (2012). First language loss in Spanish-speaking children. In Goldstein, B.A. (Ed.), *Bilingual language development and disorders in Spanish-English speakers* (2nd ed.) (pp. 193–212) Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

43 Proctor, C. P., August, D., Carlo, M., & Barr, C. (2010). Language maintenance versus language of instruction: Spanish reading development among Latino and Latina bilingual learners. *Journal of Social Issues*, 66(1), 79–94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2009.01634.x>

44 Ansari, A., & Crosnoe, R. (2015). Immigration and the interplay of parenting, preschool enrollment, and young children's academic skills. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 29(3), 382–393. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000087>

45 Halgunseth, L., Jia, G., & Barbarin, O. (2013). Family engagement in early childhood programs: Serving families of dual language learners. In Governor's State Advisory Council on Early Learning and Care, *California's best practices for young dual language learners: Research overview papers* (pp. 119–171). CDE Press. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ce/documents/dllresearchpapers.pdf>

46 Barrueco, S., Smith, S., & Stephens, S. (2015). *Supporting parent engagement in linguistically diverse families to promote young children's learning: Implications for early care and education policy*. Child Care & Early Education Research Connections.

47 Castro, D. C., Ayankoya, B., & Kasprzak, C. (2011). *The New Voices, Nuevas Voces guide to cultural and linguistic diversity in early childhood*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

48 Bergey, R., Quick, H. Anthony, J., Manship, K., White, L., Handjojo, C., Hauser, A., & Keuter, S. (2020). *The early learning and care context for dual language learners in California*. American Institutes for Research & First 5 California. <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/Early-Learning-and-Care-Context-for-Dual-Language-Learners-California-Brief-508-FINAL-Jan-2020.pdf>

supporting DLLs, including obstacles associated with workforce preparation and development, a lack of standards and accountability, and data gaps. The report offered several policy recommendations to better support DLLs at each level of government.⁴⁹ In November 2020, the same group released a California-specific report examining these issues and found, consistent with national trends, a lack of coordinated standards for early educators and administrators, inadequate investment in workforce preparation and development, and insufficient funding to thoughtfully expand access to dual language programs for the state's DLLs.⁵⁰

Since the early 2000s, the California Department of Education (CDE) has developed various guidance documents that address DLLs and their families, including, but not limited to:

- early learning foundations (e.g., *Preschool Learning Foundations in English Language Development*);⁵¹
- curriculum guidance (e.g., *Preschool Curriculum Framework for English Language Development*);⁵²

- program guidelines (e.g., *Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Program Guidelines*⁵³ and *Preschool Program Guidelines*);⁵⁴
- early childhood educator competencies (e.g., *Early Childhood Educator Competencies on Dual Language Development*);⁵⁵ and,
- resource guides (e.g., *Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy, and Learning*).⁵⁶

However, these guidance documents are nonregulatory and do not obligate compliance.

Research and evidence suggest that several areas of the early learning and care system should be redesigned to provide equitable support for DLLs and their families:

- Identification and assessment of DLLs
- Preparing the early learning and care workforce to serve DLLs
- Program approaches that support home language and promote bilingualism
- Program improvement infrastructure that addresses the unique needs of DLLs

49 Children's Equity Project & Bipartisan Policy Center. (2020). *Start with equity: From the early years to the early grades. Data, research, and an actionable policy agenda*. Children's Equity Project. https://childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2020-10/CEP-report-101320-FINAL_0.pdf

50 Meek, S., Blevins, D., Catherine, E., & Alexander, B. (2020). *Start with equity: California*. Children's Equity Project. <https://childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2020-11/CA-equity-brief-111020.pdf>

51 CDE. (2008). *California preschool learning foundations* (Vol. 1). <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/preschoollf.pdf>

52 CDE. (2010a). *California preschool curriculum framework* (Vol. 1). <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/psframeworkkv1.pdf>

53 CDE. (2019). *Infant/toddler learning and development program guidelines* (2nd ed.). <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/itguidelines2019.pdf>

54 CDE. (2015). *California preschool program guidelines*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/preschoolproggdlns2015.pdf>

55 CDE & First 5 California. (2011). *California early childhood educator competencies*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/ececompetencies2011.pdf>

56 CDE. (2009). *Preschool English learners: Principles and practices to promote language, literacy, and learning*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/psenglearnersed2.pdf>

Identification and Assessment of DLLs

A major challenge in addressing the needs of DLLs and their families is the lack of a systematic approach to identification of a child's home language. As noted earlier, DLLs comprise approximately 60 percent of children birth to age five, but they only account for 44 percent of children enrolled in California State Preschool Programs (CSPP).⁵⁷ The gap points to a lack of consistency in how data are collected and reported regarding the number of DLLs in publicly funded early learning programs. The challenge that California experiences in accurate identification and reporting of DLLs is prevalent throughout the country. In its *State of Preschool 2017* report, the National Institute for Early Education and Research reported that only 26 of 60 state-funded preschool programs could report data on the number of DLLs served.⁵⁸ Accurate data that identifies young children's DLL status is critical to informing how the state allocates finite resources to develop workforce competencies and engage families in culturally and linguistically responsive partnerships.⁵⁹

A major challenge in addressing the needs of DLLs and their families is the lack of a systematic approach to identification of a child's home language. Accurate data that identifies young children's DLL status is critical to informing how the state allocates finite resources to develop workforce competencies and engage families in culturally and linguistically responsive partnerships.

Programs must also implement valid and comprehensive assessment of children's learning and development in their home language and in English.^{60,61} Such assessment is essential to providing individualized instruction that improves young children's learning opportunities and overall development. Developmental screeners in both a child's home language and in English can help educators more accurately determine whether children need further evaluation in order to identify language delays or other learning disabilities.⁶² Early educator preparation and ongoing professional development training must address best practices for assessing DLLs' knowledge

- 57 Nores, M., Friedman-Krauss, A., & Frede, E. (2018a). *Special report: Supporting dual language learners in state-funded preschool*. National Institute for Early Education Research. http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/YB2017_DLL-Special-Report.pdf
- 58 Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Weisenfeld, G. G., Kasmin, R., DiCrecchio, N., & Horowitz, M. (2018). *The state of preschool 2017: State preschool yearbook*. National Institute for Early Education Research. https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/State-of-Preschool-2017-Full-2-13-19_reduced.pdf
- 59 US Department of Education & US Department of Health and Human Services. (2016). *Policy statement on supporting the development of children who are dual language learners in early childhood programs*. <https://sites.ed.gov/underservedyouth/files/2017/01/Policy-Statement-on-Supporting-the-Development-of-Children-who-are-Dual-Language-Learners-in-Early-Childhood-Programs.pdf>
- 60 Peña, E. D., & Halle, T. G. (2011). Assessing preschool dual language learners: Traveling a multiforked road. *Child Development Perspectives*, 5(1), 28–32.
- 61 Espinosa, L., & Gutierrez-Clellen, V. (2013). Assessment of young dual language learners in preschool. In Governor's State Advisory Council on Early Learning and Care, *California's best practices for young dual language learners: Research overview papers* (pp. 172–208). CDE. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ce/documents/dllresearchpapers.pdf>
- 62 Espinosa & Gutierrez-Clellen (2013).

and skills.⁶³ At the same time, the current lack of DLL-specific measures and tools to assess and monitor children's learning and development impedes overall efforts to accurately assess DLLs' learning and development and the quality of instructional opportunities afforded to them.

Improvement Strategies

Design and collect home language data. Including data about children's home language as part of the cradle-to-career data system would allow the state to build a consistent point of reference for DLL concentration and needs. This could assist both policymakers and program administrators in better understanding the needs of children and families, informing funding allocation, supporting continuous program improvement, and providing data about program access, participation, and child outcomes.^{64,65,66} A short home language survey should be developed to gather information on children's languages and families' language use. The home language survey should be administered to all children served in all programs that receive public funding as part of enrollment. This should include implementation across a mixed delivery system of care, including center-based programs;

family child care homes (FCCs); and, family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) providers.

Support the use of culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment tools. In partnership with researchers and the DLL stakeholder community, the state should work to identify valid, reliable, and comprehensive tools for assessing the learning and development of DLL children, and should develop tools if none are available. Such assessment tools should be validated in multiple languages and made available for use. For example, assessment tools in Spanish are available for use with young children.^{67,68} The state could also strengthen and update the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)⁶⁹ for this purpose. Furthermore, training should be available for early educators on how to administer assessment tools with DLLs. The Head Start Program Policy Guidelines (45 CFR § 1302.33)⁷⁰ offer explicit guidance on conducting assessments for DLLs, providing a reference point for California: (1) language assessment in both English and the home language; (2) for domains other than language, assessment using the language that best reflects the child's skills in that domain; and, (3) ensuring that those conducting the assessment have sufficient knowledge of the child's home

63 Espinosa, L., & Zepeda, M. (2019). *ECE dual language learner essential competencies for working with dual language learners*. Unpublished manuscript. <https://earlyedgecalifornia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Faculty-Initiative-Project-Dual-Language-Learners-PD-2020.pdf>

64 Zepeda et al. (2020).

65 Children's Equity Project & Bipartisan Policy Center (2020).

66 Meek et al. (2020).

67 Barrueco, S., López, M., Ong, C., & Lozano, P. (2012). *Assessing Spanish-English bilingual preschoolers: A guide to best approaches and measures*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

68 Moodie, S., Daneri, P., Goldhagen, S., Halle, T., Green, K., & LaMonte, L. (2014). *Early childhood developmental screening: A compendium of measures for children ages birth to five* (OPRE Report 201411). Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/early-childhood-developmental-screening-a-compendium-of-measures-for-children-ages-birth-to-five>

69 The DRDP (2015) is a formative assessment instrument, developed by the CDE for young children and their families and used to inform instruction and program development. More information on the DRDP can be found at <https://www.desiredresults.us/>.

70 Head Start Program Performance Standards, 45 CFR § 1302.33 (2016). <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-33-child-screenings-assessments>

language and culture. California's *Preschool Program Guidelines* also provide similar guidance.⁷¹

Preparing the Early Learning and Care Workforce to Serve DLLs

Given that the majority of California's young children are DLLs, the probability that early learning practitioners will serve DLL children and their families is high (see the previous discussion of identification of DLLs). A recent survey of a representative sample of California's early learning and care programs found that 98 percent of licensed center-based programs and 70 percent of FCCHs served at least one DLL in 2019. In fact, 42 percent of children enrolled in centers and 60 percent of children enrolled in FCCHs are DLLs.⁷² The state's program and licensure standards should address the needs of DLLs.⁷³ The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) oversees the management and issuance of the Child Development Permit for early childhood teachers and administrative staff in licensed care. Therefore, its guidelines play a major role in the development of and access to education and training approaches at the pre-service and in-service levels. Currently, the CTC has approved a set of Early Childhood Education Teacher Performance Expectations (ECE-TPEs) that include DLLs in a general way.

Efforts to prepare the workforce to support DLLs must target resources and support for home-based providers and early educators. Professional learning opportunities need to account for educators' work environments, community context, and their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

These could be refined to include explicit guidance regarding support for the home language, including dual language development and fostering bilingualism. Such changes would serve as an incentive for institutions of higher education to address the specific pedagogical needs of DLLs in their coursework.^{74,75}

Efforts to prepare all early educators to support DLLs must also recognize the reality of the many different types of early learning and care settings in which young children are served. One workforce sector that merits particular consideration is home-based providers. The majority of DLLs, many of whom are Latino, are served by FFNs and by FCCHs nationwide.⁷⁶ During the COVID-19 pandemic, the home-based sector of the child care workforce is shouldering much of the child care availability. A survey conducted in spring 2020 by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment

71 CDE (2015).

72 Manship, K., Brodziak de los Reyes, I., & Quick, H. (2020). *Quick facts: The landscape of early learning and care programs serving dual language learners*. American Institutes for Research. <https://earlyedgecalifornia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Quick-Facts-The-Landscape-of-Early-Learning-and-Care-Programs-Serving-DLLs-in-CA.pdf>

73 Oliva-Olson, C., Estrada, M., & Edyburn, K. L. (2017). Preparing California's early care and education workforce to teach young dual language learners. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 26(2), 87-113.

74 Nores, M., Friedman-Krauss, A. F., & Frede, E. (2018b). Opportunities and policies on young dual language learners. *Preschool policy facts*. National Institute for Early Education Research. http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Policy-facts-DLLs_July2018.pdf

75 Zepeda, M. (2017). *California gold: An advocacy framework for young dual language learners*. Glen Price Group. <https://glenpricegroup.com/californias-gold-an-advocacy-framework-for-young-dual-language-learners/>

76 Crosby, D., Mendez, J., Guzman, L., & Lopez, M. (2016). *Hispanic children's participation in early care and education: Type of care by household nativity status, race/ethnicity, and child age*. National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families. <https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/NSECE-Series-Type-of-Care-V21.pdf>

found that 34 percent of centers remained open compared to 72 percent of FCCHs in California.⁷⁷ California currently has a variety of standards associated with specific programs. Supporting DLLs in California's mixed-delivery system will require that the ECE-TPEs reflect the workplace realities of FCCH providers, who may or may not perceive themselves as part of the early learning and care system. Professional learning options that incorporate content relevant to dual language development and best practices for serving DLLs are needed, with a structure that allows for a variety of courses, modules, and learning options that are recognized as contributing to career development. Ultimately, creating accessible and flexible career pathways benefits FCCH and FFN providers, as well as DLLs and their families.

An additional consideration is the linguistic diversity represented in the population of early learning and care professionals. Immigrants represent much of the bilingual/multilingual workforce in California, and these individuals are predominantly concentrated in the lower-paying sectors, such as FCCHs and FFNs. In contrast to the teacher workforce for K-12, California's early childhood workforce serving children birth to five years of age is very diverse. Forty percent of the early childhood workforce identifies as Latino, 38 percent as White, 10 percent as Asian, and 6 percent as Black, and the languages spoken by the workforce are representative of the children they serve.⁷⁸ Thus, training and professional development offerings in languages other than English are needed to maximize participation of California's diverse workforce. Moreover, California can leverage the diversity and existing linguistic abilities of the

state's existing workforce to increase the number of bilingual providers supporting DLLs.

Improvement Strategies

Support professional development pathways that address the needs of DLLs. In an effort to increase the number of bilingual providers and the number of providers who are trained to support DLLs, the existing workforce must have equitable access to resources and training related to best practices for serving DLLs and fostering bilingualism, as well as for partnering with their families. Particular attention needs to be paid to the FFN and FCCH provider workforce to provide DLL-specific, evidence-based professional development that is culturally and linguistically appropriate. The state should provide professional development in a variety of modalities for all providers to equitably access, and in multiple languages. Effective models for such professional development should:

- account for educators' work environments and community context and be responsive to participants, cultural and linguistic backgrounds; and
- provide job-embedded experiences, such as apprenticeship models.

For state-funded early learning and care programs, the state should consider requiring DLL-specific professional development. The state should also consider making receipt of any state professional development funds conditional on inclusion of DLL-specific training, and incorporating such training into the broader quality-improvement infrastructure.

77 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE). (2020, May). *California child care at the brink: The devastating impact of COVID-19 on California child care*. https://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2020/05/CSCCE_California-COVID-Data-Snapshot.pdf

78 Migration Policy Institute. (2015). California: Quick stats on young children and workers providing early childhood and care. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-and-refugee-workers-early-childhood-field-taking-closer-look>

Transition to a competency-based workforce preparation model. As part of the state's transition to a competency-based workforce model, the state should ensure that content on language acquisition and evidence-based practices to support DLLs and their families is part of workforce preparation. This content should include, but not be limited to, dual language development, benefits of bilingualism, effective pedagogical practices for DLLs, implicit bias, trauma-informed practices, and strategies for developing reciprocal engagement and partnerships with DLL families. Options to implement such changes include:

- Require a DLL-specific module, training, and/or courses that build upon the 2018 CDE DLL Professional Development Projects,⁷⁹ including the *Essential Competencies for Working with Dual Language Learners*⁸⁰ brief, which built on the *California's Early Childhood Educator Competencies*⁸¹
- Require demonstration of competencies through experience, practice, and/or other assessment for effectively serving DLL children and families, including dual language development and biliteracy; assessment practices in both English and the home language; and, effectively engaging DLL families, including sharing information about the benefits of bilingualism. Competencies can be evaluated by the CTC's Teacher Performance Assessment
- Develop a bilingual authorization to prepare and certify early educators with the necessary linguistic proficiency and pedagogical skills to teach in a dual-language program. This would

be accompanied by incentives within the rate structure to acknowledge these educators' specialized skill set and training. Target support for existing bilingual providers to attain this authorization/specialization

Build the capacity of coaches, trainers, and higher education faculty. To better prepare aspiring early educators serving children birth to age five, it is necessary to enhance the capacity of coaches, trainers, and higher education faculty to provide DLL-specific content. DLL-specific professional development should emphasize dual language development, the advantages of bilingualism, effective pedagogical practices for DLLs, anti-bias teaching, trauma-informed practices, and strategies for developing reciprocal engagement and partnerships with culturally and linguistically diverse families. Options to implement such changes include funding to support:

- Demonstration projects to train and build the DLL capacity of faculty at colleges and universities. The projects should include practicum opportunities for faculty and a community of practice for sharing effective pedagogy
- "Grow your own" professional learning programs that train and build the DLL capacity of FCCH providers to become coaches and trainers that value the diversity and capacities of the FCCH workforce

Develop and disseminate resources to assist providers and early educators to support dual language learners and their families. There is a great need for a centralized source of quality information on effectively serving DLLs. A clearinghouse

79 For more information, visit <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/dllprofdev.asp>

80 Espinosa & Zepeda. (2019).

81 CDE & First 5 California. (2011).

of curated resources for university and college faculty, program administrators, and practitioners could include practical resources such as activity/lesson plans, lists of bilingual books, and family engagement strategies. The clearinghouse could provide resources in multiple languages, reflective of the multilingual population of children in early learning and care.

Program Approaches That Support Home Language and Promote Bilingualism

Contrary to common myths about dual language learning, exposure to the home language does not have a negative impact on children's English language development, and actually facilitates English language development.⁸² Research indicates that bilingual instruction that supports a child's home language while learning English serves as the best foundation, relative to other instructional models, for learning another language (e.g., English) and supporting long-term academic achievement.^{83,84,85} Increased knowledge of dual language development has contributed to a shift away from viewing learning one or more languages

as potentially problematic, to one which recognizes the advantages of bilingualism.^{86,87}

Bilingual instruction supports a child's home language while they are simultaneously learning English. Research indicates that bilingual instruction supports long-term academic achievement. Given that infants and toddlers are still laying the cognitive groundwork for language development, it is particularly critical that early learning and care settings use the home language to the greatest extent possible with these youngest children.

Providing home language support should not be considered optional enrichment for DLLs. It is, in fact, crucial to their participation and academic achievement throughout their educational experiences. Research suggests that, particularly for infants and toddlers, it is critical for early learning and care settings to use the home language to the greatest extent possible, as these youngest children are still laying the cognitive groundwork for language development.^{88,89} Support for the home language is reflected in the Head Start Program Performance

82 Hammer, C., Hoff, E., Uchikoshi, Y., Gillanders, C., Castro, D., & Sandilos, L. (2014) The language and literacy development of young dual language learners: A critical review. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29(4), 715–733. [10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.05.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.05.008)

83 Collier & Thomas (2017).

84 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (2017).

85 Olsen, L. (2010). *Reparable harm: Fulfilling the unkept promise of educational opportunity for California's long-term English learners*. Californians Together. <https://www.californianstogether.org/reparable-harm-fulfilling-the-unkept-promise-of-educational-opportunity-for-californias-long-term-english-learners/>

86 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (2017).

87 Children's Equity Project & Bipartisan Policy Center (2020).

88 Fuligni, A. S., Hoff, E., Zepeda, M., & Mangione, P. (2014). *Working paper #2: Development of infants and toddlers who are dual language learners*. University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute, Center for Early Care and Education Research—Dual Language Learners. https://cecerdll.fpg.unc.edu/sites/cecerdll.fpg.unc.edu/files/imce/documents/%233016_Working-Paper%232.pdf

89 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (2017).

Standards⁹⁰ and California's 2019 *Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Program Guidelines*.⁹¹

California's 2015 *Preschool Program Guidelines*⁹² outline two formal program approaches to instruction for DLLs: (1) Balanced English and Home Language Development and (2) English Language Development with Home Language Support. The first approach is designed to develop both English and the home language simultaneously. The second approach uses the home language as a means of supporting English language development as children increase their English proficiency. At present, there are many reasons why the second approach is adopted by programs, including diversity of languages served in the same program or FCCH, parental choice, program preferences, and the capacity of the workforce to use a child's home language. While there is not enough robust research to date to draw clear conclusions about the effectiveness of English with home language support,⁹³ there is evidence that more instruction in DLLs' home languages is related to higher reading and math scores and greater social-emotional skills.^{94,95} Even

when early educators are not fluent in children's home languages, a wealth of strategies exist that intentionally utilize the home language.^{96,97}

A recent survey of California early learning administrators found that the majority (65 percent) of center-based programs and FCCHs serving DLLs report offering some home language across classrooms or groups, through formal, intentional program approaches, or more informally. Furthermore, consideration of the diversity of languages served is necessary, given that the majority (57 percent) of center-based programs serving DLLs serve children representing multiple language groups (three or more), and given that FCCHs are more likely to serve DLLs who speak a common home language.⁹⁸ Overall, DLL children experience a decrease in exposure to the home language in early learning and care settings. This is reflective of the language shift that researchers found between relative care, where the home language is frequently supported, and center care for preschool-age children, where English is emphasized. Relatives were most likely to use the

90 Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center. (n.d.) *Head Start policy and regulations*. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii>

91 CDE (2019).

92 CDE (2015).

93 Buisse et al. (2014).

94 Burchinal, M., Field, S., López, M. L., Howes, C., & Pianta, R. (2012). Instruction in Spanish in pre-kindergarten classrooms and child outcomes for English language learners. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 27(2), 188–197. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2011.11.003>

95 Chang et al. (2007).

96 Castro, D. C., Espinosa, L. M., & Páez, M. (2011). Defining and measuring quality early childhood practices that promote dual language learners' development and learning. In M. Zaslow, I. Martinez-Beck, K. Tout, & T. Halle (Eds.), *Quality measurement in early childhood settings* (pp. 257–280). Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

97 Goldenberg, C., Nemeth, K., Hicks, J., Zepeda, M., & Cardona, L. M. (2013). Paper 3, Program elements and teaching practices to support young dual language learners. In Governor's State Advisory Council on Early Learning and Care, *California's best practices for young dual language learners: Research overview papers*. CDE Press. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ce/documents/dllresearchpapers.pdf>

98 Manship et al. (2020).

home language, while caregivers in centers were least likely to do so.⁹⁹ Notwithstanding the diversity of languages served, research has shown that the benefits of fostering the home language are found in more formal approaches that are focused and intentional.

Improvement Strategies

Provide incentives to expand early learning dual language programs. To encourage expansion of dual language programs, the state could incorporate into the reimbursement model incentives to encourage agencies that administer CSPP, local education agencies, and other agencies that provide early learning and care. The added funding could encourage the development of dual language programs that reflect the multilingual population of young children ages birth to five.

Develop evidence-based program approaches and meaningful partnerships with families. Once information about children's home languages has been obtained (see the previous Identification and Assessment of DLLs section), encourage and support programs to identify an intentional program approach to support the home language and English and to forge authentic, reciprocal relationships with families. Programs should draw on the aforementioned program approaches from the *Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Program Guidelines* and the *Preschool*

Program Guidelines, and on the early childhood program models outlined in the more recent publication *Improving Education for Multilingual and English Learner Students: Research to Practice*.¹⁰⁰

Update existing state guidelines and resources to reflect current and emerging research on bilingualism and effective practices to promote dual language learners' learning and development. Update early learning and development foundations, curriculum frameworks, and additional resources, such as the *Guidelines for Early Learning in Childcare Home Settings*¹⁰¹ and *Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy, and Learning*,¹⁰² to:

- align to the more recent *Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Program Guidelines*¹⁰³ and *Preschool Program Guidelines*,¹⁰⁴ and,
- better address dual language development, effective program approaches for DLLs in a diversity of early learning and care settings, DLL instructional strategies, appropriate child assessment strategies for DLLs, and reciprocal, authentic relationships with DLL families.

Develop a public awareness campaign that focuses on the benefits of bilingualism. California could benefit from a public education campaign to help raise awareness of the benefits of learning one or more languages for young children's overall academic success. Such a campaign should target

99 Espinosa, L. M., LaForett, D. R., Burchinal, M., Winsler, A., Tien, H.-C., Peisner-Feinberg, E. S., & Castro, D. C. (2017). Child care experiences among dual language learners in the United States: Analyses of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort. *AERA Open*, 3(2), 1-15. <http://doi.org/10.1177/2332858417699380>

100 CDE. (2020). *Improving education for multilingual and English learner students: Research to practice*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/documents/mleeducation.pdf>

101 CDE. (2010b). *Guidelines for early learning in child care home settings*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/elguidelineshome.pdf>

102 CDE (2009).

103 CDE (2020).

104 CDE (2015).

the general public and parents, and especially immigrant families and communities, through a network of partner organizations. For example, *Alas y Voz* is a public education campaign launched by Californians Together that is focused on this issue specifically for Latino children and families. In addition, as part of the First 5 California DLL Pilot Expansion funding, participating counties are focusing on sharing the benefits of bilingualism and home language development with families in their communities. This work serves as a potential model for future statewide expansion.

Program Improvement Infrastructure That Addresses the Unique Needs of DLLs

Quality Counts California (QCC) is the state's quality improvement infrastructure for early learning and care. The QCC Rating Matrix, a set of criteria to evaluate program quality, has minimal content specific to DLLs and does not yet comprehensively acknowledge the role of language and culture in pedagogical practice. However, some local QCC activities have incorporated data and focus on DLLs and their families.

The US Department of Health and Human Services and the US Department of Education¹⁰⁵ have outlined the following program areas as salient to addressing DLL needs in early learning and care, which can serve as a reference to California: (1) establish a process to identify DLLs when they enroll; (2) require that program materials reflect and value DLLs' home cultures and languages;

(3) provide written plans for best practices in working with DLLs; (4) communicate with families in their home language; (5) support children's home language in addition to English development; (6) require professional development on culturally and linguistically responsive practices; and, (7) require bilingual staff proficient in the language of the majority of DLLs in a program.

Improvement Strategies

Include DLL indicators and supports as part of the redesign of Quality Counts California. The state should engage stakeholders and researchers in an inclusive redesign effort to address DLLs throughout the state's quality improvement system. Child and program assessment approaches should be culturally and linguistically valid and equitably administered through the state's improvement system, building on what is stated in the Head Start Program Policy Guidelines (45 CFR § 1302.33).¹⁰⁶ Efforts to include DLLs in the QCC Rating Matrix should be accompanied by incentive dollars to build capacity:

- Embed indicators in the QCC Matrix that specifically address DLLs
- Leverage QCC training funds to develop the linguistic and cultural competence of assessors to fairly and adequately assess DLLs
- Draw upon the emerging knowledge regarding best practices from the 16 counties participating in the First 5 California DLL Pilot Expansion Study for coordinating, developing, and sharing locally designed professional development and curriculum resources

105 Joint Policy Statement on Supporting the Development of Children who are Dual Language Learners in Early Childhood Programs (2016). <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/files/dll-policy-statement-2016.pdf>

106 Head Start Program Performance Standards, 45 CFR § 1302.33 (2016). <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-33-child-screenings-assessments>

Conclusion

Given the significant numbers of DLLs in California, the state has an opportunity to design an early learning and care system that leverages DLLs' cultural and linguistic assets. Brain development research reinforces that the early years of life present a timely opportunity for developing bilingualism. Learning two or more languages results in cognitive and academic advantages that better prepare children for college and careers. For DLLs, bilingualism also promotes stronger ties with family, culture, and community which are critical for building a healthy identity. Providing the workforce with support and incentives to address the needs of DLLs can yield significant benefits for young children. Promoting bilingualism and multilingualism in the earliest years of life will benefit children, families, and the broader society in the twenty-first century.

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