

# Helping America's Dual Language *Learners* *Succeed: A Research-based Agenda for Action*



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## **Helping America's Dual Language Learners Succeed: A Research-Based Agenda for Action**

A report to the Heising-Simons Foundation and The McKnight Foundation

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Castro, D. C. (October, 2014). *Research based on best practices for dual language learners in PreK-3rd grade: Instructional strategies and language of instruction approaches*. (Commissioned paper #1). Tempe: Arizona State University.

Espinosa, L.M. (October, 2014). *Perspectives on assessment of dual language learners' development and learning, PreK-3rd grade*. (Commissioned paper #2). Tempe: Arizona State University.

Zepeda, M. (October, 2014). *Human resource support for those serving young dual language learners*. (Commissioned paper #3). Tempe: Arizona State University.

López, F. (October, 2014). *The critical role of leadership in programs designed for dual language learners, PreK-3rd grade*. (Commissioned paper #4). Tempe: Arizona State University.

Frede, E. & Figueras-Daniel, A. (October, 2014). *Policy advances & levers related to dual language learners in PreK-3rd grade*. (Commissioned paper #5). Tempe: Arizona State University.

## Introduction

**I**n the fall of 2014, the Heising-Simons and McKnight Foundations provided support for a National Research Summit on the Early Care and Education of Dual Language Learners in Washington, DC. The goal of the two day summit (October 14-15, 2014) was to engage and extend the established knowledge base accrued by the Center for Early Care and Educational Research Dual Language Learners (CECER-DLL), while simultaneously informing the future potential efforts by the Heising-Simons and McKnight Foundations specific to the early care and education of dual language learners. Day two of the Summit focused on new directions in research, policy and practice related to DLLs in ECE settings. This day included a smaller number of attendees, 20 people, and centered on the presentation of five commissioned papers. Attendees were asked to read each paper prior to the Summit and come prepared to discuss them. Each author of a commissioned paper was asked to prepare a 15-minute presentation of his or her paper and facilitate a discussion. Paper topics

included:

- ◆ Topic 1— Research Based Models and Best Practices for DLLs across PreK-3rd grade.
- ◆ Topic 2—Perspectives on Assessment of DLLs Development & Learning, PreK-3.
- ◆ Topic 3—Human Resource Development and Support for Those Serving DLLs.
- ◆ Topic 4—The Critical Role of Leaderships in Programs Designed for DLLs, PreK—3.
- ◆ Topic 5—Policy Advances & Levers Related to DLLs in PreK-3rd grade (Each commissioned paper is available at <https://www.mcknight.org/resource-library>).

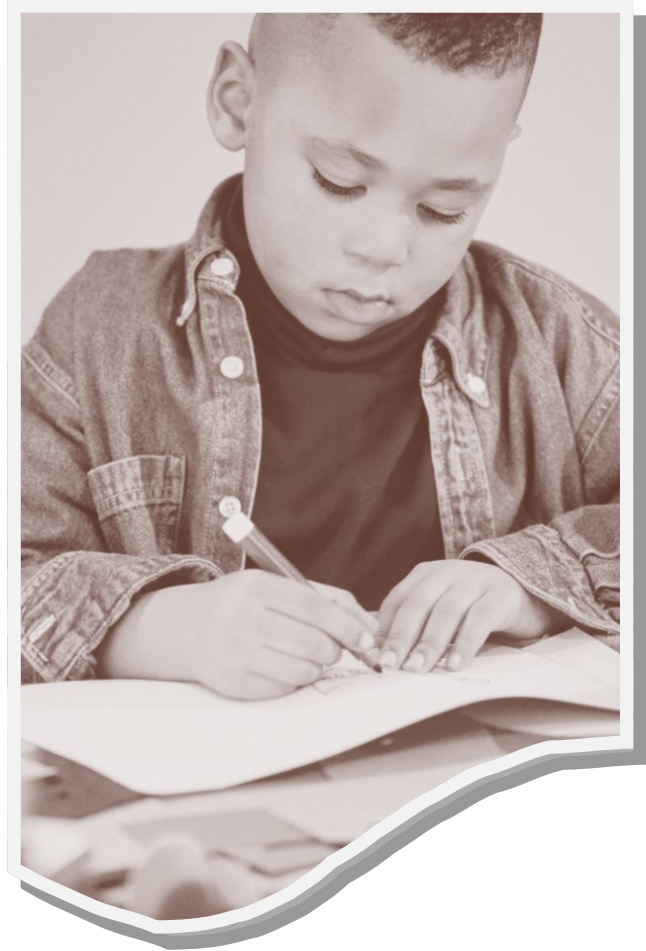
The following attempts to provide a short summary and synthesis of the topics covered in these papers and the discussion generated at the Summit. In addition, a set of recommendations are presented for each topic with regard to the implications drawn from these synthesis and of particular relevance to the supporting foundations' future investment considerations related to DLLs.



## Instructional Strategies and Language of Instruction Approaches

The increased linguistic diversity of the United States population that has occurred in the last two decades is reflected in early education classrooms nationwide. A report from the U. S. Census indicates that in 2011, twenty six percent of people ages five and older spoke a language other than English, and among them 62% spoke Spanish. The next most spoken language other than English was Chinese (4.8%). Other languages, including Arabic, Hebrew, Indo-European, Asian and Pacific Island, Native American and African languages ranged in percentage between 2.6 and 0.2 percent. Related to young children, over a third of children enrolled in Head Start programs, nationally, are dual language learners, and 84% of those DLLs are Latinos; for Early Head Start, 26% of children enrolled are DLLs and 91% of those DLLs are Latino children. Even though, Spanish is by far the non-English language most spoken in the U.S., there are many communities characterized by their multilingualism.

An understanding of the developmental trajectories of dual language learners is critical to make instructional decisions that will address the educational needs of these children. Recent reviews of the research on the cognitive, language, literacy and socio-emotional development of dual language learners from birth to age five, as well as reviews of developmental research with school-aged dual language learners have concluded that the development of monolingual and bilingual children differs in many ways across domains and that those differences are typical characteristics and not a sign of disability. However, the positive effects of high quality education on children’s early development and learning have been well documented. Research focusing on dual language learners (DLLs) has shown that high-quality early education practices (as defined from a monolingual perspective) are as beneficial for DLL children as they are for their monolingual peers; but they are not sufficient to support an equal level of academic success among DLLs; therefore, instructional enhancements are necessary to support DLLs’ development and learning.



**Instructional strategies to support DLLs**  
A synthesis of research related to instructional and classroom experiences of DLLs indicates

that the following domains and strategies need to be taken into consideration to enhance development and learning opportunities:

(1) Conduct ongoing and frequent assessments to monitor DLLs' development in both their first and second language, as well as monitoring progress in all other developmental domains. In particular, close monitoring of DLLs language development is important to inform instructional planning so that practices are tailored to children's levels of proficiency and are targeting specific areas in which they may need additional support. A major challenge to conduct valid and reliable assessments of DLLs development and learning progress is the limited availability of measures normed on this population, thus, the selection of assessment tools will be an important consideration to avoid misinterpretations based on the use of inappropriate tools, especially when standardized instruments are used. Recommendations to assess DLLs include using a combination of standardized measures and systematic observational methods, as well as portfolios of children's work to obtain the most accurate information about DLLs' academic performance, gathering information across settings and types of interactions.

(2) Provide focused small-group activities. DLLs



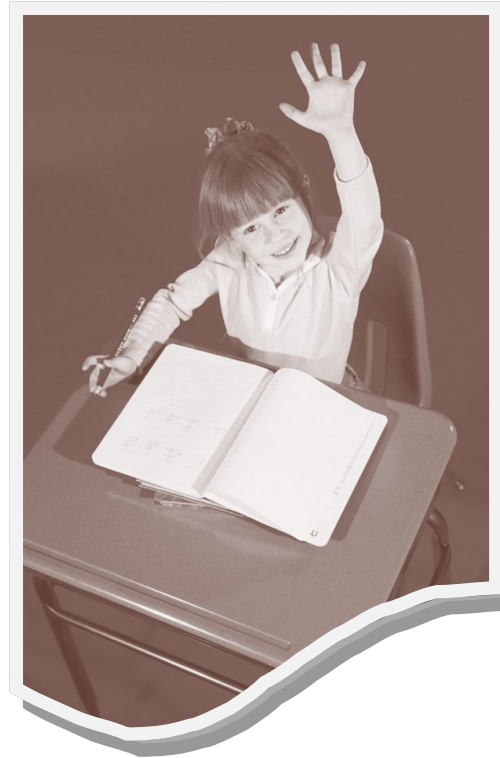
need opportunities for additional exposure to and use of new concepts and words in their second language. Randomized controlled trials of reading interventions for struggling dual language learners in grades K-5 have indicated that small-group and peer-assisted interventions allow children multiple opportunities to respond to questions, to practice reading skills, and to receive explicit instruction on vocabulary instruction and

phonological awareness. Small group activities should be conducted with no more than 4-5 children and planned in conjunction with classroom wide activities.

(3) Provide explicit vocabulary instruction. For monolingual children, most vocabulary learning occurs incidentally from conversations and by listening to words in their everyday routines. Children who are learning a second language will not be able to

take advantage of incidental vocabulary learning until they become proficient in that language. Moreover, since DLLs are learning vocabularies in two languages, exposure to a word in one language will be limited to the amount of opportunities that the word is used in that particular language. Therefore, teachers need to create conditions in which words are learned in an effective and efficient manner and this will require that teachers purposefully plan for repeated exposure to specific words and opportunities for children to use these words multiple times in a variety of settings. Explicit instruction will accelerate vocabulary learning for DLLs, that can be done through read-alouds, and direct teaching of core vocabulary, using the primary language strategically.

(4) Ensure development of academic English. To be successful in school, dual language learners need to develop the specialized language of academic discourse that is different from conversational skills. Lack of proficiency in academic English can interfere with learning other academic content. As an example, although children might learn mathematical concepts and skills using manipulatives, they also need to learn the language of mathematics in order to be successful in school. Therefore, the curriculum should incorporate opportunities to provide



explicit instruction of the academic language related to basic mathematics concepts and skills.

(5) Promote socio-emotional development through positive teacher-child relationships and facilitating children's participation in the socio-cultural group of the classroom. The preschool environment may represent DLLs first unknown social environment as well as

their first time in a different cultural environment, and for children receiving instruction only in English, there will be the additional challenges of having difficulties communicating, following directions, expressing ideas and feelings, and responding to questions consistently. DLLs may feel withdrawn, insecure, and will likely be under stress. No much attention has been given to this aspect of DLLs development in the research literature, but research with monolingual children indicates that children who feel rejected by their peers in their early years face higher risk of lower academic achievement, a greater likelihood of grade retention and/or dropping out of school, and a greater risk of delinquency and of committing juvenile offenses in adolescence.

### **Language of instruction approaches for dual language learners**

Three distinct approaches to language of instruction for DLLs can be identified:

- ◆ English immersion programs. All or mostly all instruction and teacher interactions are in English. The goal of these programs is English acquisition and development; there is no intent to develop children's home languages nor is the home language used to a significant degree to support children's learning. Children are not



English  
Immersion  
Programs

Transitional  
Programs

Maintenance or  
Developmental  
Programs

## **Distinct Approaches to Language of Instruction for DLLs**



necessarily forbidden from speaking the home language, but its use is not encouraged nor actively supported. One advantage of English immersion programs is that they can accommodate children from many home languages. English immersion preschools, however, they are not consistent with best practices based on research.

- ◆ Maintenance or developmental programs. Such programs are at the opposite end of the spectrum. These programs use the children's home language and English extensively in the classroom. The goals are to (1) maintain and develop the home language and (2) help children to acquire and develop English proficiency. A classroom might include all DLLs from the same language background, or both DLLs and monolingual English-speaking children. In the latter case, these are called dual language programs; their goal is to promote bilingual competencies for both DLLs and their monolingual English-speaking peers.
- ◆ Transitional programs. Transitional programs lie between English immersion and maintenance programs. They use the home language to one degree or another, but the goal is not necessarily maintenance or further development of



the home language. The home language is used to help children acquire concepts and content, learn how to function in preschool, and engage in all classroom activities. Children can also learn songs, rhymes, and games or participate in science lessons carried out in the home language, but the goal is generally to help

children transition to an all-English classroom.

Among language of instruction approaches in bilingual education, two-way bilingual immersion (TWI) is emerging as an effective and increasingly common approach to address the needs of bilingual learners. Also referred to as dual language programs, TWI provide

dual language learners and native English speakers with an education in two languages.

### **Multilingual classrooms**

Classrooms enrolling children speaking not one but several different home languages are increasing. In general, instruction in those classrooms is offered only in English, although, bilingual or two-way immersion programs can also enroll children speaking languages other than the two languages of instruction. This happens, for example, when Spanish and English are the languages of instruction in bilingual programs, and children speaking other languages at home are enrolled. In English immersion classrooms enrolling children from multiple language backgrounds, support of children's first language should still be provided and be a priority for school administrators and teachers. Developing close collaborations with families of DLLs will be essential as they can provide exposure to the first language. The goal of developing and maintaining the first language may not be fully reached, but increasing children's exposure and use of their first language in the school and classroom environment will support not only their English language acquisition and academic performance but also the development of DLLs' positive self-esteem and cultural identity. Using music in different



languages, labeling the classroom with the different languages (using different colors per each language, or using different languages on alternate days or weeks), and making books in different languages available to children are some examples of ways in which various home languages can be present in the classroom. In addition to supporting the home language, sheltered instruction strategies should be used

to assist with teaching new vocabulary and comprehension of content for all children whose first language is not English. They include the use of visual aids, such as props, pictures, and graphic organizers, as well as gestures, body movement and hands-on activities to demonstrate concepts.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The type and quality of early education in programs serving dual language learners should be a concern given the documented school readiness gap and low academic performance of DLLs in the early years. Research has shown that there are differences in the development of children growing up bilingually when compared with their monolingual peers across all domains. Also, the contextual factors affecting these children's development and learning may differ from those experienced by monolingual children. These lead to the conclusion that instructional strategies and language of instruction approaches should be designed to specifically target DLLs needs instead of using the traditional monolingual/mono-cultural approach.

It is important to point out that most research related to the early education of DLLs is cross-sectional, pre-posttest evaluations. Therefore, there is a need for more longitudinal studies that examine children's outcomes over time and the conditions under which language and related academic outcomes can be distinguished as effective in serving DLLs. These studies should engage high-population groupings in which the native language and English are provided in varying bilingual models. And, studies that focus on



multilingual circumstance in which many languages are present in the ECE classroom. The intent of this type of research and development is not to “test” one approach with another. But instead to provide evidence for practitioners to best evaluate effective

strategies and programs for the population of DLL's which they serve—no one size is likely to fit all.

## General Principles of Assessment for DLLs

**T**he accurate and valid assessment of young DLLs' development and achievement is essential to individualizing instruction and improving the quality of education they receive. Individualized instruction enhances the learning opportunities of young children and promotes the important developmental and achievement outcomes necessary for school success. Useful individual child assessment, however, can be accomplished only through comprehensive, ongoing assessments that are fair, technically adequate, and developmentally valid so that we can determine if children are making progress toward the intended outcomes. That is, individual child assessments must be linguistically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate in order to know what children

are able to do, how children are progressing, and what educational decisions need to be made to support that progress.

A cardinal rule in the selection of assessment measures is that the purpose of the assessment must guide assessment decisions. As stated in the National Research Council Report on Early Childhood Assessment, "different purposes require different types of assessments, and the evidentiary base that supports the use of an assessment for one purpose may not be suitable for another." For example, assessment strategies utilized by teachers for daily instructional purposes are typically less formal than assessment strategies employed by administrators for program accountability or evaluation purposes. This approach is consistent with the Principles and Recommendations for Early





Childhood Assessments developed by the National Education Goals Panel. Four broad purposes for early childhood assessments were established:

- 1) To promote learning and development of individual children;
- 2) To identify children with special needs and health conditions for intervention purposes;
- 3) To monitor trends in programs and

evaluate program effectiveness;

- 4) To obtain benchmark data for accountability purposes at local, state, and national levels.

To date, each of the above noted purpose for assessment requires its own instruments, procedures, and technical standards and has carried its own potential for cultural and linguistic bias. Although there may be some

similarities across the different types of assessment, it is nevertheless critical to understand the unique considerations and recommendations for assessing DLLs according to each of the stated purposes. Ideally, a truly comprehensive and integrated assessment system that addresses all four purposes for DLLs would employ a congruent set of measures and procedures; reflect the state's ELDS; provide a coherent profile of the functioning and progress of children, classrooms, and programs; and be adequately sensitive to capture DLLs' important developmental changes over time as well as school program effects.

#### **Assessment of DLLs**

##### *Both Languages Need to Be Assessed*

Becoming proficient in a language is a complex and challenging process that takes many years for children of all ages. As with any type of learning, children will vary enormously in the rate at which they learn languages. The speed of language acquisition depends on factors within the child and in the child's learning environment. The child's personality, aptitude for languages, interest, and motivation

interact with the quantity and quality of language inputs and opportunities for use to influence the rate and eventual fluency levels. As children acquire a second language, one language may be more dominant because they use that language more often than the other at a particular point in time. If children are assessed only in their least-proficient language, their abilities will be underestimated. Frequently, children demonstrate a language imbalance as they progress toward bilingualism. Depending on experiences and learning opportunities, children may not perform as well as monolingual speakers of each language in all domains. This is a normal and, most often, a temporary phase of emergent bilingualism.

#### *Language Proficiency and Dominance*

The first issue facing educators who work with DLLs is to determine the proficiency in each language as well as the distribution of knowledge across the two languages. Young DLLs, whether simultaneous or sequential second-language learners, most likely will have a dominant language, even though the differences may be subtle. Before educators

can decide on a child's developmental status, educational progress, or the need for educational intervention, it is essential to know the language in which the child is more proficient. Typically, the young DLL will have a larger vocabulary, or a specialized vocabulary, along with greater grammatical proficiency and mastery of the linguistic structure of one of his languages. This is the language the child has had the most exposure to, uses more fluidly and often prefers to use.

Unfortunately, there are no individual child assessments specifically designed to determine language dominance. At present, it is recommended that educators ask the parents/family members about the child's earliest language exposure to determine early



language learning opportunities. Research indicates that the amount of input, frequency of use, and the parents' estimates of language ability highly relate to the level of proficiency in the language.

#### *Observational Assessment for Instructional Decision Making and Improvement*

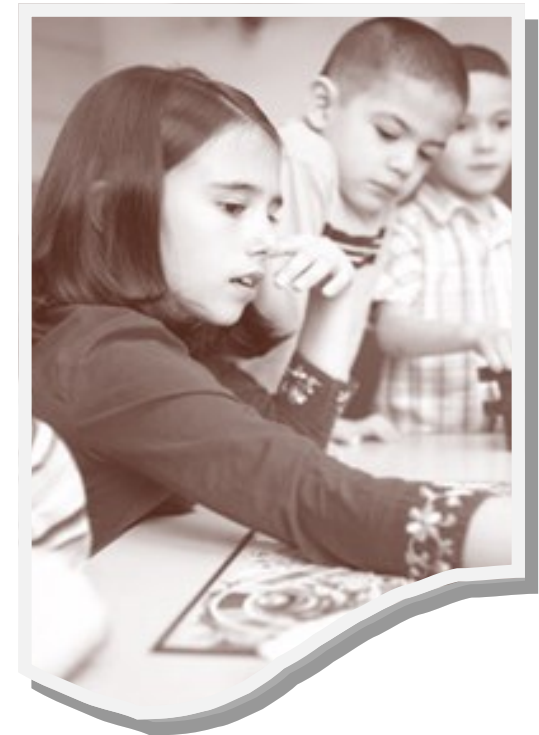
Informal, indirect methods of observing young DLLs' interactions and language use can provide important information on the child's level of language development or proficiency.

Research has shown that teachers can be reliable in estimating a child’s level of proficiency and English use based on their observations of the child. This type of assessment is often referred to as authentic, meaning that ongoing observations of children’s behavior and use of language over time in the natural classroom environment are less contrived than standardized testing and, if aligned with curriculum goals, can be critical to instructional planning. Observations, language samples, and interviews are considered authentic methods because no specific patterns of correct responses are assumed; instead, they aim to describe a child’s skills and knowledge in the context of the natural classroom environment. Observations and insights from other staff members who speak the child’s home language and have contact with the child—for example, bus drivers and family or health specialists—can be collected through standardized questionnaires or family interviews.

In addition to information from parents, staff, and teachers, language development may be assessed directly by asking children to talk

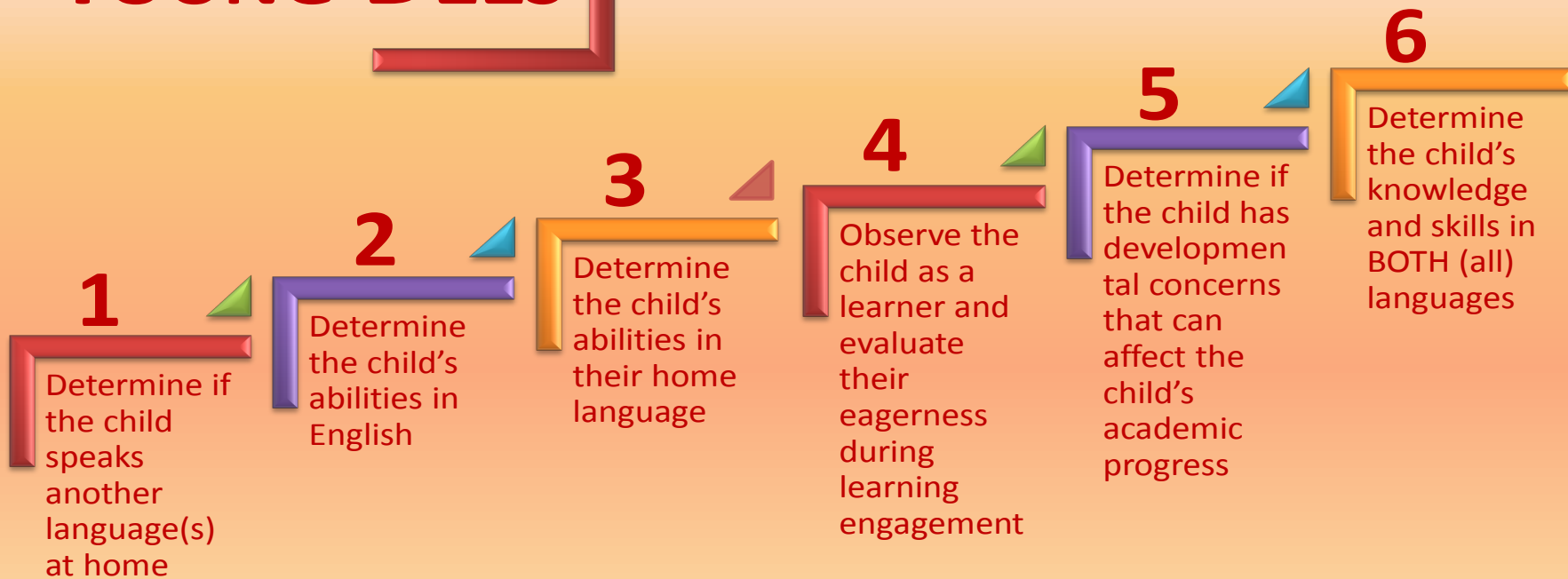
about a past event or personal experience or by talking about a storybook using story retellings. These are also considered authentic assessment methods because they seek to evaluate what the child can do with language using spontaneous language samples. Through these language tasks, children can show their ability to produce and comprehend a language. Adults can model a statement about each picture (e.g., “This is John and his frog”; “One day they went to the park”) and then ask the child to retell the story while looking at the pictures. Through this approach, it is possible to determine if a child has sufficient mastery of the target language to comprehend the main actions in the story and to use complete sentences to talk about it.

Observational approaches that are aligned with curriculum goals, focus on educationally significant outcomes, rely on data from multiple sources gathered over time, and include families are recommended by the leading early childhood education (ECE) professional associations to improve and individualize instruction. Frequent and ongoing assessment for instructional



improvement and adjustment include observations of each child’s performance, checklists, rating scales, work samples, and portfolios during everyday activities. In order to accurately collect data on the emerging competencies of young DLLs, assessors need to understand typical development of young children who are growing up with more than one language, their home languages, and their

# STEPS TO FOLLOW IN ASSESSING YOUNG DLLs





cultures.

In California, all state-funded child development programs are required to administer the Desired Results Developmental Profile—Preschool, DRDP-PS© (2010). Teachers complete this observational child assessment twice a year to measure children’s progress toward the Desired Results or learning expectations. The assessment results are then used to inform instructional planning for individual children as well as to adjust instruction for groups of children. This child assessment is part of a larger Desired Results (DR) system that includes information from parents, a measurement of the quality of the program environment (ERS), and an annual Program Self-Evaluation.

In this assessment system, the California Department of Education, Child Development Division (CDE/CDD) has provided guidance on how to assess the skills of DLLs. For children who are dual language learners, both the LLD [Language and Literacy Development] and ELD [English-Language Development] measures are completed. The ELD measures are used to

document and assess progress in learning to communicate in English. The LLD measures are used to assess progress in developing foundational language and literacy skills. Children who are dual language learners may demonstrate mastery of developmental levels in their home language, in English, or in both. Children who are dual language learners will vary substantially in their acquisition of English language competencies, depending on factors such as the degree of exposure to English, level of support provided in their home language, and their motivation to acquire English. Overall, the development of language and literacy skills in a child’s first language is important for the development of skills in a second language, and therefore should be considered as the foundational step toward learning English.

This guidance to teachers is intended to ensure that the assessors of DLLs have the



capacity to judge the child’s abilities in any language, not just in English. Especially for children who are in the early stages of English acquisition, it is crucial that someone who is proficient in the children’s home language determine their understanding of mathematical concepts, their social skills, and their progress in the other developmental domains. Without an assessor who is fluent in the child’s home language and properly trained to conduct the assessment, it is not possible to obtain accurate results.

*Assessment for Screening and Referral of*

### *Children Who May Have Special Needs*

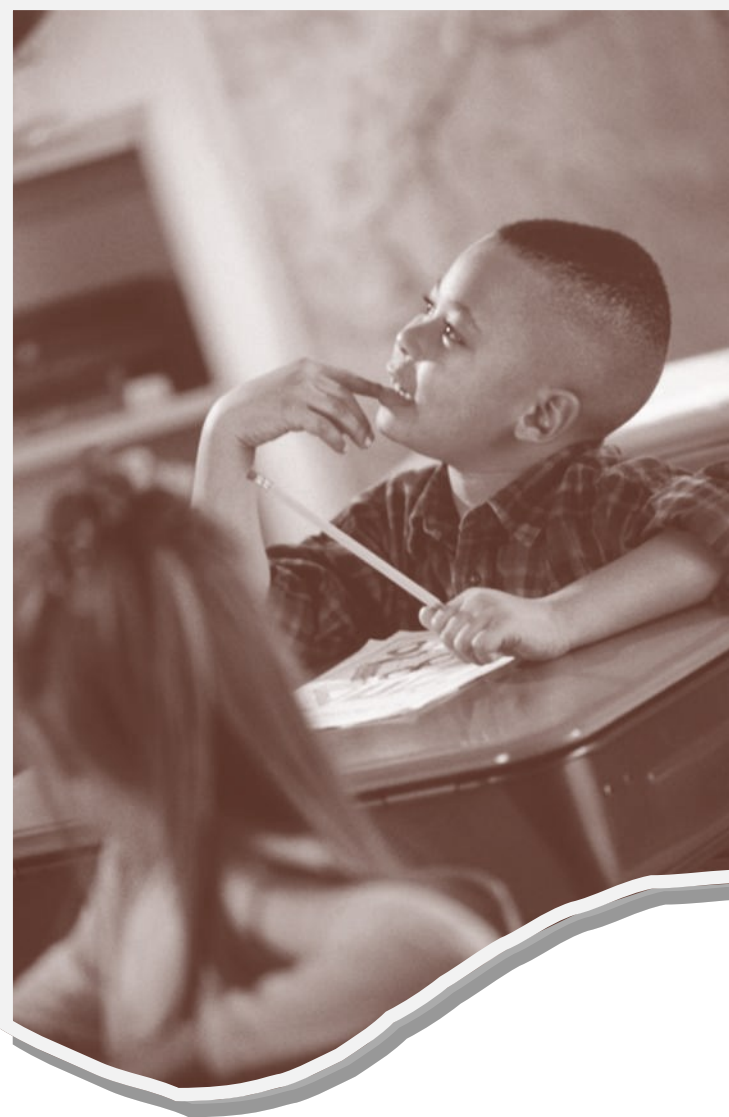
Developmental screening is the process of early identification of children who may be at risk of cognitive, motor, language, or social-emotional delay and who require further assessment, diagnosis, and/or intervention. Currently, a large number of young Latino and other DLLs with special needs are not identified. Nationwide, the percentage of Latino preschoolers with disabilities (15 percent in 2004) is smaller than the percentage of preschoolers in the general population identified with special needs. In short, there is a lack of substantive attention to the assessment of DLLs as it related to special needs populations.

### **Steps to Follow in Assessing Young Dual Language Learners**

Teachers and practitioners may be guided by specific questions that can help them make decisions during the assessment process. The first question seeks to determine if the child speaks a language (or languages) other than English at home so that the teacher can decide which language(s) to assess. This can be determined through a parent/family interview

or questionnaire. If the child uses or is exposed only to English at home, assessments can be conducted in English. If the child speaks another language, assessment must be conducted in both languages. A child with typical language development should show age-appropriate knowledge and language skills in the home language. A child with language learning difficulties will show delays in both languages and should receive further evaluation to address specific developmental needs.

The second question is to determine the child's level of second-language development. Most likely, the DLL will be at one of the stages in English-language development described above, and the preschool curriculum will need to provide a focus on oral



language development, early literacy skills, and writing. The child's language skills are likely to affect academic readiness if not sufficiently addressed.

The third question focuses on obtaining information about the child's development and skills in the home language. If the child exhibits limited home language development, this will indicate a risk of developmental language delays, and a referral for an evaluation will be needed to develop an intervention plan. If the child shows age-appropriate competencies in the home language, continued language development will be needed to maintain skills and prevent loss of the home language.

The fourth question focuses on the teacher's opinion about the child's ability to learn. Teachers observe the child during learning activities and can evaluate the child's responsiveness during these interactions. Comparing the child to other DLLs can provide critical information about a child's learning potential. Children who are highly responsive in spite of their limited English skills are likely

to be successful learners as long as opportunities for teacher-guided interaction and instruction are provided. Children who have limited responsiveness to high-quality learning interactions are likely to be at risk of academic delays. In these cases, a full evaluation is needed to determine the course of individualized intervention.

The fifth question determines whether there are any developmental concerns that can affect the child's academic progress and that may need to be addressed directly. To answer this question, it is critical that the measures

selected are culturally and linguistically appropriate. Only screening instruments that are administered in the two languages (if both are spoken) will reveal whether a true disability exists. If appropriate instruments are used and the child shows delays in both languages, a full evaluation will be necessary to develop an individualized intervention. If no appropriate instruments are used, the results



of such screenings should be interpreted with caution, and additional evidence of concern (e.g., parent report, evaluation of child responsiveness) will be needed to provide converging support for a referral.

Finally, as has been discussed above, children may have different skills in each language. Thus, the last question focuses on determining

the child's knowledge and skills in each language. By conducting assessments in both languages, critical information about what the child knows and is able to do in each language will be needed to plan instructional activities that address the child's needs in each language.

#### **What Teachers and Program Staff Need to Know to Conduct Valid Assessments**

Teachers and support staff will be asked to accurately assess young DLLs' development and achievement in order to individualize instruction, improve the quality of education, and improve academic school readiness. As discussed above, this multistep process requires all program staff members to be knowledgeable about certain aspects of the linguistic and cultural development of young DLLs as well as the specific characteristics of the assessment instruments they administer. They will need to understand the stages of English-language acquisition and the importance of home language development for overall language development and future academic achievement. They will also need to be skilled in observational authentic

assessment methods related to curriculum goals and linking ongoing assessment results to individualized instruction

Administrators and program staff must be able to make judgments about the developmental, cultural, and linguistic appropriateness of available

instruments to make the best decisions about the use of specific assessments for their DLL children (see Barrueco et al. 2012 for a discussion of strengths of ECE assessments available in Spanish and English).

When reviewing assessment results, teachers and staff need to understand the limitations of standardized instruments used with young DLLs and use their professional judgment when interpreting and applying the



assessment results. Assessment in early childhood education is a process that requires teams of individuals who all contribute specialized information about the child. Therefore staff must be skilled in team collaboration. Finally, all staff members must be competent in working across cultures to establish effective working relationships with diverse families, many of whom may hold distinct parenting values and beliefs.

### Recommendations for DLL Assessment

- ◆ Program administrators and staff need to consider the unique linguistic, social, and cultural characteristics of young DLLs when selecting culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment instruments and approaches—and when interpreting results. The characteristics of the children and families served must be considered in decisions about specific assessment instruments.
- ◆ Program staff needs to administer carefully selected assessments for specific purposes: in order to determine if a child may be at risk of cognitive, motor, language, or social–emotional delay, which will require further assessment, diagnosis, and/or intervention (developmental screening). Standardized instruments need to be culturally and linguistically appropriate and unbiased as possible.
- ◆ Program staff members need to assess the proficiency level of young DLLs in both the home language and English by using a variety of informants, multiple sources of data collected over time, and a team that

includes at least one member who is fluent in the child’s home language.

- ◆ Program administrators and staff need to:
  - ◇ Interpret assessment results cautiously, particularly when evaluating the results of standardized vocabulary assessments;
  - ◇ Consider limitations of results of standardized assessment instruments;
  - ◇ Complement results with information from other sources, particularly families;

Conclusions should be considered as tentative and continually updated.

- ◆ All ECE program staff members need to receive professional development on appropriate assessment methods and instruments in order to conduct valid assessments of young DLLs.

The accurate and valid assessment of young DLLs’ development and achievement is essential to improving the quality of education they receive.



## Human Resource Support for those Serving Young Dual Language Learners

**T**he increasing number of children whose language and culture is distinctive from US mainstream language and culture requires a reformulation of current approaches to teacher preparation to ensure the optimal development of this growing child population. There is extensive literature that demonstrates that the quality of teacher-child relationships across the early childhood years is a strong predictor of a child's future socio-emotional and academic development. However, the majority of theory and research about teacher-child relations and effective pedagogical practice has not focused on the needs of young dual language learners (DLLs), and what we know about supporting those who educate young DLLs is limited and in need of concerted attention.



### General Teacher Competencies

Teacher competencies focus on what educators need to know and be able to do. In addition, competencies include the development of dispositions or the attitudes

and beliefs that form the basis of behavior for effective interaction in an educational setting. States are increasingly developing early childhood educator competencies in order to be eligible for federal funds from the Race-to-

# HUMAN RESOURCE SUPPORT FOR THOSE SERVING YOUNG DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS



approach does not address nor builds upon particular capabilities that a teacher brings to their interactions with children.

To provide a more focused perspective on teacher competencies by individual teacher qualities, the Alliance for Better Communities in collaboration with the National Council of La Raza developed of a set of competencies that distinguish between teachers by language capability, acculturative status and years of experience in working with DLLs. Competencies with sample indicators are described for teachers who are monolingual English speakers, bilingual speakers of English and a child's home language and bi-literate in English and a child's home language. The organization of language abilities is cross-referenced by whether the teacher is monocultural (comes from a US mainstream perspective) or is bicultural (sharing socialization experiences from US mainstream culture and another culture).

As US child demographics diversify, increasing consideration is being given to the development of cultural competence:

behaviors, attitudes, policies, structures, and practices that allow for individuals to work effectively in cross-cultural circumstances. Cultural competence, as a disposition, is an appropriate subject within a discussion of teacher competencies in general and certainly when thinking about DLLs. NAEYC, through their Quality Benchmarks for Cultural Competence initiative, developed a self-assessment tool to review the presence of culturally competent practices. Reflected in this self-assessment are eight core concepts that underscore the significance of culture and home languages and dialects. The Office of Head Start's (OHS) updated multicultural principles stress the role of culture within teaching practices and the continued development of a child's primary language while learning English.





**Pre-Service Preparation**

With growing public and policy attention to the importance of the early year and the qualifications of teachers viewed as key to young children’s development, pressure for increased educational attainment of teachers has gained currency. The 2007 reauthorization of Head Start mandated that half of all lead teachers have a baccalaureate degree in early childhood or a related field by 2013. According to recent data from National Institute of Early Education Research, 30 states oblige lead teachers in state funded preschool to possess BA degrees. Yet, workforce requirements remain low in many states and in privately funded early education programs. Nationwide, workforce requirements for early childhood educators serving children age zero to five varies widely from state to state with requirements ranging from a high school diploma to a baccalaureate degree. Requirements may also differ based on the work setting such as a family child care home or a center-based environment.

Although equivocal, recent research suggests that it may be particular teacher behaviors

and practices and not educational degrees, per se, predict desirable child outcomes. Early childhood experts argue that the field needs to move beyond the debate regarding the value of a degree to more precisely delineating the nature of the education that prospective teachers receive in route to a degree. Early childhood teacher preparation programs in institutions of higher education have been criticized for relying on out-dated content and not providing adequate experiences working with children. A reconceptualization of teacher preparation should take place that couples knowledge acquisition with a practice component. In fact, researchers perceive the “active ingredient” of improved teacher pedagogy may likely stem from experiences where meaningful practice takes place with a supervisor or coach.



College and university programs typically indicate an interest in the needs of children of color and second language learners. Early childhood teacher preparation programs usually say that they promote the importance of meeting the needs of children of color and second language learners. In reality, they deliver little content or practical experiences to prospective teachers. Teacher preparation programs should require that all prospective teachers receive education and training in how bilingualism develops, provide fieldwork experiences with child populations that mirror more closely the population diversity in which teachers will likely work and develop metrics to assess how well teachers interact with children of color and second language learners.



Institutions of higher education that are increasing their capacity to educate teachers in working with dual language learners should also diversify their faculty. One possible consequence of the lack of diversity in the higher education faculty is a failure to meet the needs of prospective or current teachers who themselves are members of ethnic and

language minorities. Positive correlations have been found between the presence of diverse faculty in a teacher preparation program and coursework related to cultural or second language development.

Unlike the workforce focused on children age zero to five, teacher qualifications are

relatively uniform within the Kindergarten to Grade 3 workforce sector. These teachers are required to have a Bachelor's degree and hold a teaching certificate in the state in which they teach. Most states require some form of field experience and supervised student teaching as a requirement of licensure. Some states have induction and mentoring requirements for

beginning teachers that are regulated by designated state agencies.

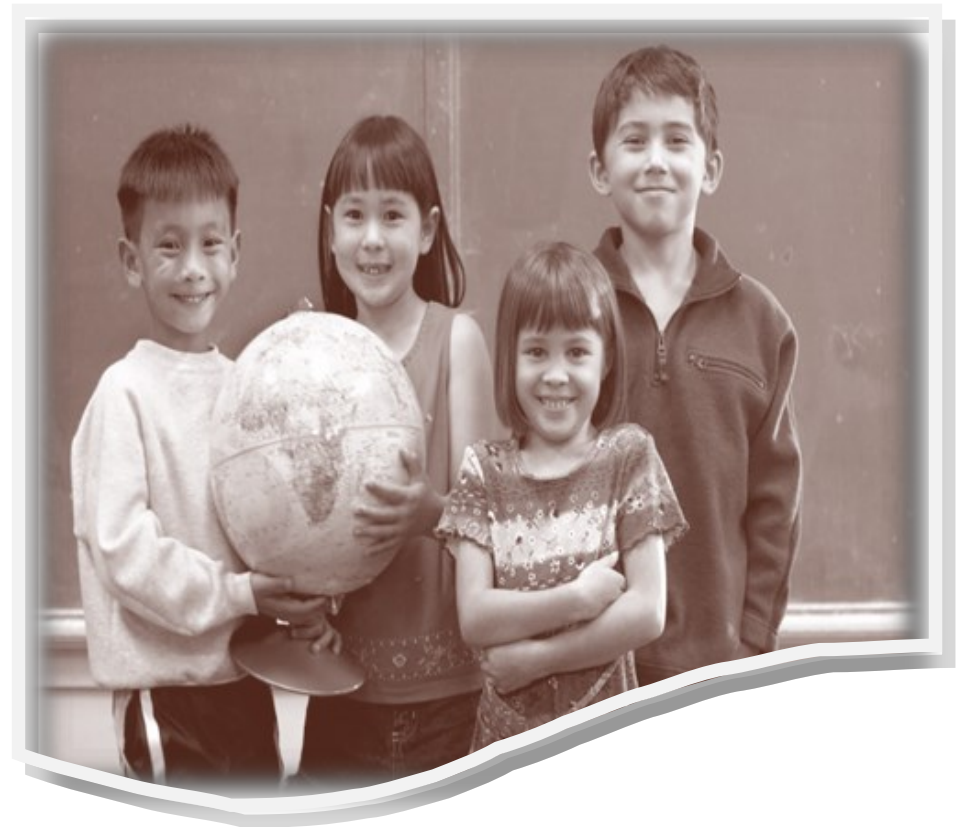
As the early childhood field moves towards the consolidation of the education and training of individuals serving birth to age eight, teacher preparation specifically for K through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is being scrutinized. In states where preschool programs are linked to elementary systems, preparation programs have been found to focus little on recent knowledge of developmental science, have limited fieldwork in high quality environments and have licensing and hiring practices that encourage prospective teachers to seek broad degrees and not specialized training. Additionally, teachers emerging from these programs lack an understanding of pedagogical practices for DLLs.

The need for school districts to improve the achievement of students whose first language is not English has motivated institutions of higher education to respond by developing distinct coursework integrated into existing degree programs or certificates consisting of 4 to 6 courses that may or may not be credited

to a particular degree program. Although the addition of coursework specific to preparing teacher for language learners is more common in K-12 preparation, Illinois is one state that has mandated preschools with DLLs be staffed with teachers who are certified in both Early Childhood education and an endorsement in English as a second

language. As a result colleges and universities have established graduate and undergraduate programs to address this workforce need. As preparation programs continue to better prepare teachers for DLLs, four curricular and institutional factors remain imperative: (1) faculty professional development; (2)

specialized coursework including practice focused on working with DLLs; (3) the infusion of content on cultural and linguistic diversity; and (4) support for prospective teachers who are already bilingual.



### **In-Service Preparation**

In-service preparation refers to education and training that takes place while teachers are working with children. For the K through 12 workforce, in-service takes place after licensure. In contrast, the zero to five workforce does not necessarily participate in pre-service and their education and training is often exclusively obtained through a variety of in-service experiences such as workshops or short-term trainings.

As preschool teachers are being viewed as key in the improvement of child outcome, there is a concomitant focus on effective in-service experiences. Necessary activities that cut across both pre-service and in-service preparation for preschool teachers include: (1) strengthening early educators' human and social capital through increased educational attainment with attention to improved literacy capabilities and improvement of psychological well-being; (2) strengthening approaches to the education of teachers in institutions of higher education and that of agencies delivering in-service education and training; (3) focusing on teaching practice in relation to

specific content areas such as math and language and literacy; and (4) improving overall classroom quality through the implementation of proven curriculum with on-site technical assistance or coaching.

Both workforce sectors utilize short-term trainings and workshops to assist teachers, however, these approaches by themselves have not been effective. In teacher preparation there is a renewed focus on mentoring and coaching as a method to individualize training within a supportive interpersonal relationship. Research on the effects of coaching for preschool teachers suggests that where coaching occurs it may be its dosage and intensity that make a difference for improved practice. Although research on the effects of coaching in improving teacher practices holds promise, its use with teachers serving DLLs merits close scrutiny. Some questions regarding the capacity of coaches and the medium through which coaching takes place include: (1) what are the qualifications of coaches who assist teachers in understanding DLLs? (2) What types of experiences do coaches have working in environments



populated by DLLs? (3) What are coaches' attitudes and beliefs regarding bilingualism and are their attitudes and beliefs in sync with the teachers they assist? and (4) What do coaches know about the neighborhoods in which teachers work?



**Policy Implications**

A focus on strengthening the capacity of institutions of higher education (IHE) to appropriately prepare teachers who will be successful with children from diverse cultural

and linguistic backgrounds is necessary. IHEs need to concentrate both on the appropriate education and training of Pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade classroom teachers *and* doctoral candidates who will become teacher educators. A strong focus on both content and practice are critical. Knowledge regarding first and second language acquisition and appropriate pedagogy for dual language learners in conjunction with opportunities for well-supervised fieldwork and student teaching experiences is vital. The formation of effective partnerships between IHEs and their local school districts can provide the basis for “hands on” experiences that will enable prospective educators to enter the classroom as prepared as possible. In addition, assessment of teachers’ abilities to work effectively with DLLs is needed.

An important corollary to strengthening the capacity of IHEs is the concomitant need to buttress the capacity of government, accreditation and other organizations focused on teacher preparation to improve their communication about how a child’s home language helps in the development of English

and the overall well-being of dual language learners. Finally, administrators and classroom teachers need ongoing support in the form mentoring and coaching that can help them understand and implement best practices for our youngest learners.

**Conclusions**

One of our greatest challenges is the capacity of the infrastructure to support teacher preparation in general, let alone one that is relevant to linguistically distinct groups of children. To what degree do individuals who have the understanding and skills to promote the development of DLLs populate our teacher preparation infrastructure? How do we strengthen the workforce pipeline that extends from the preschool classroom to the college and university classroom? A second, yet equally important concern is the marriage of the zero to five and K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade education worlds may eventually take place. The concern about this union should be about developmentally appropriate pedagogy and linguistically and culturally appropriate practice.

## The Critical Role of Leadership in Programs Designed for DLLs, PreK-3

**T**here are currently more than 4.7 million English Learners (ELs) in the US. Approximately 70percent speak Spanish as their native language. Meeting the needs of ELs varies widely due to policies and teacher preparation requirements; however, dual language programs have gained traction in part because of their ability to foster bilingualism among native English speaking students.

### Overview of Dual Language Programs

Dual language programs, also called two-way immersion, two-way bilingual or two-way bilingual immersion, are designed to promote bilingualism by bringing together a group of children who speak English as their native language and a group of children who share a non-English native language. Ideally, dual language classrooms comprise equal numbers

of students within these two groups. Dual language programs tend follow one of two models: (1) the 90:10 in which 90percent of instruction is in the non-English language during the early elementary grades and English is incrementally introduced until a balance in the two languages is reached by the middle elementary grades; (2) the 50:50 model in which instruction is delivered in the two languages, equally. In dual language programs, language learning is integrated with content instruction with goals to promote bilingualism, biliteracy, academic achievement, and cross-cultural understanding among all students.

In 2000, there were approximately 260 dual language programs in the United States. At the time, the U.S. Secretary of Education announced grants of \$15 million to expand dual language programs to 1,000 over five years. Today, there are



many more dual language programs in the US (the number of programs cited range from 460 -2000 depending on the source).

However, implementing dual language programs is not without its difficulties. Some state policies have suggested to abandon dual language programs pointing to low test scores as evidence that the program is not as effective as instruction carried out entirely in English would be. Scholars have also warned about the potentially deleterious effects of dual language settings on Latino ELs, as well as on students who are excluded from the programs.

Despite the issues, research shows that dual language programs can help both language minority and language majority students achieve academic success. What is lacking, however, is evidence on how educational leaders can successfully implement dual language programs: achieving the intended results of dual language programs and addressing the concerns raised by some scholars.



### **Educational Leadership and Dual Language Programs**

Although the accumulating scholarship is consistent with the growing number of dual language programs, there is a lack of attention

in the research to the role of school leaders in the implementation of dual language programs. The paucity of information on dual language programs aimed specifically at school leaders is problematic because school



leaders are the primary agents for school improvement and fostering organizational growth by having a clear mission, setting directions, providing professional development, and restructuring and managing the instructional program. Yet, most leaders find themselves unprepared to meet the needs of the growing sector of ELs. The lack of attention to the demographic shift in the curriculum that prepares school leaders continues to be identified as one of the reasons leaders face challenges in providing equitable and high quality education for ELs. The absence this curriculum contributes to the challenges faced by educational leaders in dual language schools.

Nevertheless, school leaders are charged with cultivating language proficiency for all students. As such, they should be knowledgeable about why dual language programs are effective and school leaders must also know how to successfully implement these programs—particularly in Pre-K through grade 3, which serve as foundational years for the cultivation of bilingualism and biliteracy.



**CRITICAL ASPECTS THAT LEAD TO THE SUCCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF A DLL PROGRAM**



*Successful Leadership for Dual Language:  
Critical Aspects*

Critical aspects that led to the success and sustainability of a dual language program include:

- ◆ knowledgeable leadership and a commitment to dual language;
- ◆ identifying and allocating resources;
- ◆ and building capacity.

*Commitment to and Knowledge about Dual Language Programs*

School leaders need knowledge across three areas:

- ◆ cultivating language proficiency;
- ◆ ensuring access to high quality teaching and learning;
- ◆ and promoting sociocultural integration.

This knowledge should be incorporated into the leadership curriculum to meet the needs of ELs.

*Cultivating language proficiency*

School leaders must have an understanding of the different factors that must be considered in dual language programs such as the demographic profile of the student



population, students' backgrounds, and the vision and mission of the school community. Despite any constraints caused by localized political, social, and economic forces, school leaders must also be clear about the most educationally sound model and make decisions based on research, optimally

approaching language proficiency broadly by promoting bilingualism.

*Ensuring access to high quality teaching and learning*

It is not only school leaders, but also a vast majority of teachers—over 70percent—who

lack the training to be effective with ELs. Discrete requirements in state’s teacher education programs lack training in English as a Second Language and English Language Development. The lack of knowledge about teaching English learners in preparation programs has a marked effect on ELs’ achievement. Therefore, all teachers must have:

- ◆ knowledge about first and second language development;
- ◆ knowledge of how a students’ language proficiency influences scores that would otherwise reflect students’ understanding of content;
- ◆ and knowledge of accommodations to use that mitigates the degree to which proficiency is reflected in content area assessment scores.

To be effective in supporting teachers in dual language settings, school leaders must possess knowledge about language development and formative assessment.

Although school leaders observe teachers’ practice to gauge the extent to which they are supporting students’ academic growth,

teachers need tools to gauge students’ needs in classroom contexts and make instructional decisions in response to these needs. Despite the importance of knowing where students’

weaknesses are there is a paucity of training provided to preservice teachers on formative assessments that can have a particularly negative impact for ELs. This knowledge is not



only absent from most teacher preparation programs, but also those focused on the development of school leaders. Given school leaders' role in identifying needed resources for teachers, knowledge of formative assessment—particularly in Pre-K through grade 3—is salient.

*Promoting sociocultural integration*

Another reason dual language programs are considered the solution to traditional methods of providing equitable learning opportunities to ELs is because they are viewed as assets to their peers and nurture a sense of belonging. School leaders who are aware of the academic and social benefits of dual language, as well as the knowledge teachers must possess to be successful in these programs, are able to commit to these programs. To ensure their continued success, however, school leaders understand how to allocate the necessary resources and build capacity.

**Allocating Resources and Building Capacity:** School leaders are instrumental in promoting a shared vision and creating structures within a school to support the vision. These efforts



are most successful when leaders distribute the roles among individuals and foster teachers professional growth on the curriculum, instruction, and assessment of students.

With regard to allocating resources and building capacity for schools transitioning to dual language programs, educational leaders can ensure:



- ◆ Settings are organized to promote bilingualism and biliteracy;
- ◆ Formative evaluation on early biliteracy provides teachers valuable information to monitor student progress in early biliteracy skills and then to adjust instructional practices that will lead to

- improvements in students' biliteracy outcomes; and
- ◆ Teachers and school leaders are supported in their endeavor to learn how to use formative assessment within communities of practice.

Communities of practice can ensure that, through mutual engagement, teachers and school leaders pursue dual language collectively while building capacity within the school and community.

*Example of Dual Language Communities of Practice (COP)*

School leaders and Pre-K and kindergarten teachers from a group of schools participated in training to support the transition to dual language. To gain the prerequisite knowledge, over the course of a spring and summer, participating teachers and school leaders took part in: (a) book discussions on linguistically responsive teaching; (b) webinars on these texts; (c) and two face-to-face professional development sessions: an initial ½ day workshop and an extensive 3 ½ day academy. The ½ day workshop provided a basic overview of dual language programs. The academy served as an intensive retreat during which teams from each school participated in workshops on curriculum and instruction, assessment and organizational development. During the following academic year, professional development activities continued

within a series of webinars on the use of formative assessments in the area of early biliteracy.

Within each school an “Implementation Team” COP formed. At a minimum, this team included several teachers, one to two administrators, and an outside-mentor with expertise in dual language schools. Some COPs also included parent representatives from the various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These COPs developed a shared repertoire to accomplish the goal of transforming their school to dual language through reading foundational books on dual language, participating in the 3 ½ day academy and participating in ongoing professional development webinars. These individuals had different roles in the transformation and relied on one another for support and guidance. School leaders identified areas that need support, championing and resourcing the work to support teachers, while not usually bringing direct expertise.

**Conclusion**

The paucity of evidence focused on the role of



educational leaders in the successful implementation of dual language programs, particularly in grades Pre-K through 3, is in part attributable to the absence of this focus in the educational leadership curriculum. As such, it is clear that the research evidence favoring dual language programs that is available must be disseminated among educational leaders through their training and professional development. Specifically, the curriculum for educational leaders must incorporate knowledge about cultivating language proficiency, ensuring access to high quality teaching and learning, and promoting sociocultural integration for ELs.

Research on the kind of knowledge teachers must have to be successful, particularly with

ELs, must also be disseminated among school leaders because of the role they play in identifying areas in need of professional development. Whereas a large body of research that can be incorporated into the educational leadership curriculum exists in terms of what dual language programs are and their effectiveness in fostering bilingualism and biliteracy, other aspects of research are sparse. The focus of leaders in implementing dual language, particularly in foundational early grades, is missing. Accordingly, future research focused on the ways educational leaders can successfully implement dual language programs, considering the particular needs of Pre-K to grade 3, is needed to inform the field.

## Policy Advances & Levers Related to DLLs in PreK-3rd Grade

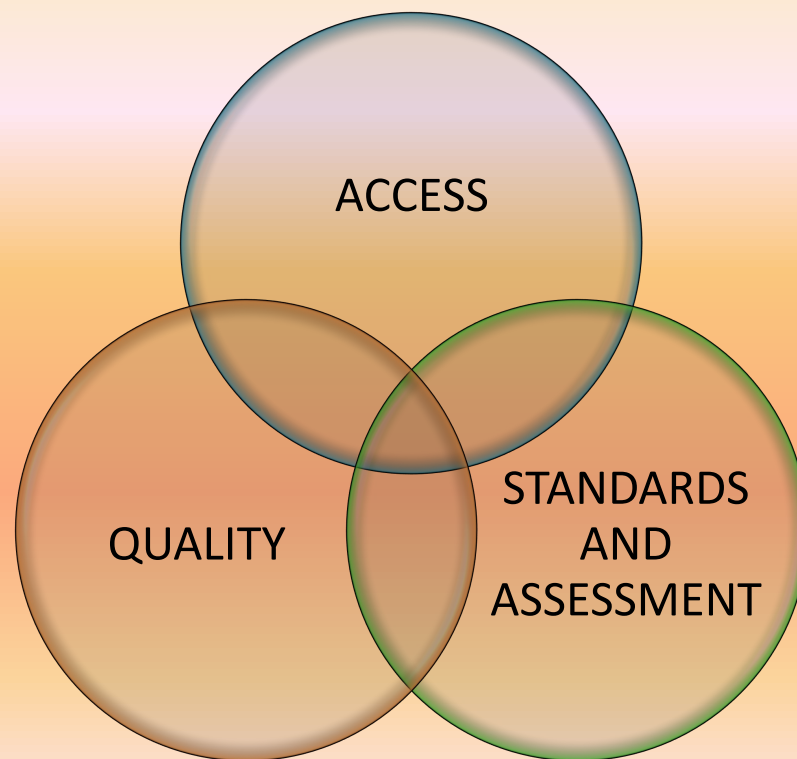
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he field of early childhood education is amassing a body of science to inform policy and practice for preschool through 3rd grade children who are learning two languages or dual language learners (DLL). However, there are still many gaps in the information base which seriously impairs stakeholders from making science-based decisions. Thus, using the information being generated in the current policy context requires going beyond current scientific foundations to analyzing promising approaches and practices.

Three major categories of policy are considered most significant for DLLs and are addressed here: 1) access to preschool through 3rd grade (P-3) services, 2) quality of those services, including staff qualifications, and 3) standards and assessment. Each of

these areas is clearly multifaceted and they are interconnected and overlapping.

### The P-3 Landscape: Access to Services for DLLs



Early childhood care and education is a complex and varied jigsaw puzzle of funding streams, state and local policies, and program standards. Policies and practices for young DLLs is no exception to this, and, partly as a

result of this disparate mixture, there are many holes in our knowledge base. In this section, we review what we do know about access and participation rates that may inform policy development and that may have a direct or indirect effect on access to and participation in educational services for young DLLs.

Since 2002, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) has collected information on state-funded preschool program policies. In recent years, they have added what information the states could provide on service to DLLs. Of the 53 state-funded preschool programs in 40 states and Washington, DC, only 22 collect data on the number of dual language learners served. Unfortunately, many of the states that are lacking this information have a large percentage of parents with low English proficiency; for example, California, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, New Jersey, New York, New Mexico, and Oklahoma are among the states that at the time of the 2013 Yearbook did not collect information on home language of participating children. Thus, doing an analysis of access and attendance in state pre-k for

DLLs is not possible.

The Office of Head Start Program Information Report (PIR, 2014) reports on ethnicity and home language of children served. In the most recent report for 2013-2014, 36percent of the children served in Head Start and 99percent of the children served in Migrant Head Start are identified as being Hispanic/Latino in ethnicity. Spanish as a primary language is reported for 23percent of Head Start enrollees contrasted with 84percent English home language. The majority of Migrant Head Start participants speak Spanish. Home languages other than English or Spanish amount to the remaining five percent with no single language over one percent of the population served.

Recent analyses of national data on access and participation in early childhood center-based programs more broadly, including publicly supported child care and other private providers, reveal that Latino three and four year olds are less likely to participate in center-based programs than any other ethnic group. There has been many hypotheses about why Hispanic and Spanish-



language dominant children in particular are less likely to enroll in preschool programs. It seems likely that lack of access to quality programs is as important as factors such as





income, parental education, and other family characteristics.

Given the near universal nature of kindergarten and the fact that compulsory schooling begins at age six, access to school in K-3 grades for DLLs is not typically a matter of availability, rather it is an issue of whether the services to which they have access are appropriate. This issue has been identified by many and very carefully described in a recent publication of the New America Foundation. As with many practices, identification for placement in program options varies not only from state to state but from district to district. In some cases, even when the identification

methods are the same, the services available to children with the same profiles will vary among the schools within the district. Thus, although K-3 DLLs almost all have access to schooling, what they experience in terms of support for English acquisition, content learning and improvement in home language is inconsistent. These common practices in identification and program options are predominantly not research-based and are particularly damaging to students who experience transience and therefore are directly affected by the inconsistency.

#### **Quality of Services to the P-3 DLL Population**

It is clear that there are cognitive and social

benefits for children who attend high quality preschool and growing evidence indicates that DLLs benefit more than others from effective preschool education. Factors influencing effectiveness of early education include class size, intensity and duration of the intervention, teacher qualifications and interactions, curriculum and fidelity of implementation, parental engagement and educational leadership. Contrary to earlier findings, recent analyses of national data show that the quality of preschool classrooms that DLLs attend does not differ from those attended by English only children. The educational circumstances once children enroll in kindergarten change and are similar

to educational settings for other children with low family income which are characterized by low state proficiency scores. It is reasonable to assume that quality factors are likely more important for DLLs given the task of learning a second language compounded with potential cultural differences and family characteristics that are associated with lower achievement.

The State Preschool Yearbook reports on a number of state policies regarding quality of services for DLLs in state-funded pre-k. Of the 53 state-funded programs, 19 have no regulations specific to services for DLLs which at the least means that dual language of instruction is not prohibited but state guidance is also missing that might directly support specific services. The majority of state programs expressly support/allow bilingual instruction and 19 allow monolingual home language instruction. No state policies require English-only instruction. State policies for 20 of the programs require that a home language survey be administered but only 14 programs have policies that require that programs develop a systematic, written plan for how they will serve DLLs. Twenty-one programs require that information to parents be available in the home language and 17 require that bilingual staff be provided if children's home language is not English.

### **Teacher Qualifications**

Regardless of other quality factors, access to teachers who speak the home language and to programs with dual language of instruction is sporadic. There is clearly a shortage of teachers who speak the home language of the students and teachers are rarely prepared with



strategies to support dual language acquisition. The recent decision by the Illinois State Board of Education to delay the requirement for preschool teachers of DLLs to hold a bilingual or ESL endorsement was based on school district reports that they could not find teachers that met the requirement. Only about 15 percent of early childhood teachers in public preschool programs report speaking Spanish, while 78 percent report speaking English only. The most recent PIR indicates that of the total teaching staff (lead and assistant teachers) in Head Start, 27percent are bilingual with 24percent speaking Spanish and in Migrant Head Start virtually all of the teachers are bilingual. Twenty-five percent of elementary schools report a shortage of qualified

foreign language teachers. Unfortunately, the data on teacher qualifications are not reported by percentage of DLL children served so it is not possible to know how many DLL children are in classrooms with a teacher who speaks their home language or whether a dual language approach is being provided.

### **DLLs, Their Families and School Engagement**

The importance of parental engagement with schools is not unique to DLL populations. However, the convergence of several factors common to many Hispanic families are worthy of special attention as they relate closely to the later achievement. These factors include low levels of educational attainment, low levels of English proficiency, low paying and inconsistent employment, and poverty. Hispanic families also have characteristics which can be used as powerful resources such as strong “familialism” and high incidence of two-parent or extended family situations. Still, studies have found that for language minority parents, negative effects of a lack of parental

engagement persist through the end of kindergarten and that when DLLs have the benefit of parental engagement in their education, they fare better.

Parental engagement can be hampered by specific “determinants”: parents’ beliefs regarding the support roles they have in their

children’s education, the extent to which they believe that they possess the knowledge and tools they need as educators and third is their perceptions of schools willingness to have them participate. Hispanic immigrant groups score lowest on measures of both school and home involvement. Barriers include low English proficiency and functional literacy, a





DLLs is the existence of an infrastructure that uniformly guides best practices and accountability. Levers here include well developed standards and assessment practices that adequately and validly measure progress and inform practice. In addition a compilation of information that also encompasses both policy and relevant resources could be helpful for systemic decision making. What currently exists however is a set of well-intentioned, but disjointed policies, each regulating different aspects of the landscape with little guidance on delivery for states.

guidelines specifically for DLLs, nine states have sections for addressing DLLs within their guidelines and 8 states at least mention DLLs in the Language and Literacy areas of their guidelines. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which are now adopted by 43 states excludes any specific standards for DLLs and instead includes guidelines for applying the standards to DLLs that basically describes DLLs as a heterogeneous group who should receive individualized “diagnosis” and instruction. They advise teachers to recognize that it is possible to achieve the standards for reading and literature, writing and research, language development, and speaking and listening without manifesting native-like control of conventions and vocabulary.

lack of public funding to support language acquisition, cultural access or other immigrant family specific needs, a lack of alignment between efforts in ECE and K-12 leading to parent alienation after preschool, and variability in attitudes towards immigrants across communities and districts.

**Landscape of Standards and Assessment for DLLs in P-3**

Perhaps the biggest push towards an agenda of well-aligned and beneficial experiences for

Standards pertaining to general academic progress for young DLLs fall into three major separate categories. These include individually developed state early learning standards, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and for Head Start, the Child Development and Early Learning Standards. The National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness (NCCLR) analyzed how state preschool standards address DLLs and found that only three states (CA, KY, and MA) have

Another set of standards are those mandated by Title III for identification and intervention for English proficiency. Lack of cohesive standards for assessment of English proficiency is compounded by incoherent and at times, ineffective reclassification assessments to determine accurately who DLLs are, and when they are ready to exit support programs. Federal policy dictates

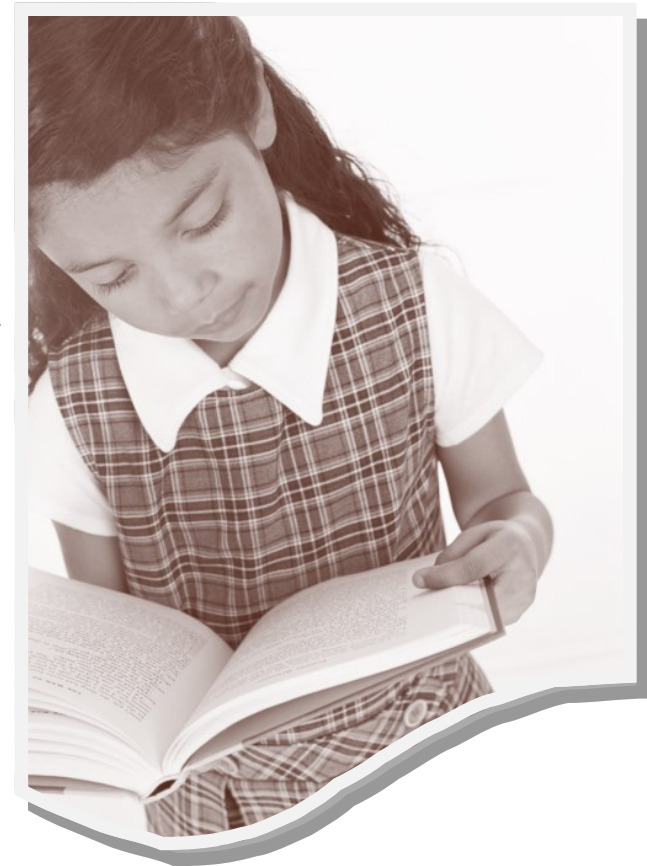
through Title III that states develop or adopt English language proficiency standards and that an annual test of English proficiency be administered. As part of its accountability provisions the updated ESEA requires that states define criteria about progress in English, create English proficiency standards for performance and set annually increasing performance targets for the population of DLLs meeting the criteria. The US Department of Education released the National Evaluation of Title III Implementation Supplemental Report: Exploring Approaches to Setting English Language Proficiency Performance Criteria and Monitoring English Learner Progress in 2012 as means of support to state policy-makers in their efforts to generate empirically-based standards and assessments to meet the Title III requirements. In large part, the release of this report acknowledges a gap between the goals of the legislation and states' capacity to adequately meet its provisions.

The World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium has begun to disentangle this problem by outlining

standards, performance definitions, guiding principles for grades K-12, with preK standards soon to come. Though the WIDA website reports that 36 states are currently members, it remains largely unclear how states are incorporating the resources created by the consortium. New Jersey, for example, utilizes the 2012 Amplification of the English Language Development Standards, Kindergarten-Grade 12 as its mandatory code in districts receiving Title III funds. For purposes of identification, New Jersey allows all districts to select proficiency tests from an approved list, which may or not mean that districts select the WIDA developed entry tests to identify DLL children in need of support services. Further, in non-Title III funded districts, though the WIDA 2012 Amplification standards are mandatory, exit assessments are the choice of the districts from an approved list.

### **Potential Policy Levers to Enhance Access and Quality in P-3 Education for DLLs**

Based on our review of current policies and



practices and our own experience as researcher, policy-maker, and practitioner, we developed recommendations for improving participation and quality in early education P-3 for young DLLs at the national/federal, state

and local program level. We recommend one major lever from which many other levers follow. We also include smaller scale but never-the-less possibly influential endeavors. In some cases, we note where further research is needed or where the recommendation itself should be evaluated if implemented. However, most of the national and federal recommendations are actually enacted or aimed at state and local policies and practices although the scope is national.

One major initiative that would link to a number of other strategies is to sponsor an intensive expert working group or council to develop Standards of Best Practice for Young Dual Language Learners modeled after other related successful national initiatives: 1) the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s Developmentally Appropriate Practices, 2) NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria & Guidance for Assessment, 3) Division of Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children’s Recommended Practices, and, 4) the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher



Education’s (NCATE) Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation Institutions. The research base is strong enough now to come to consensus on best practices for DLLs at the program and classroom level as well as for teacher preparation. In addition, this expert group could develop a common definition of DLL and

of “highly qualified teacher” for DLLs. Developing and publishing these best practices can lead the field to improve as it has for the standards mentioned above. Obviously, as research leads to better understanding of effective practices the standards would need to be revised.



The Standards of Best Practice for Young Dual Language Learners could then form the basis for designing and evaluating a number of program and policy improvements such as the following:

An annual report on state policies to support best practices for DLLs similar to the NIEER Yearbook which would highlight whether states are adopting effective policies. Developing the standards for the annual report should be a second charge to the expert working group. The federal government and private foundations could be encouraged to use the results of the annual report in making differentiated funding decisions by giving priority to high scoring states for expansion of their programs and to low scoring states to enable adoption of the policies. The Preschool Yearbook (and other similar efforts such as

the Data Quality Campaign) has been highly effective at informing and facilitating improvements in state policy-making. The Young DLL Yearbook might include policies such as the following:

- ◇ inclusion of teacher preparation for DLLs in certification requirements
- ◇ adoption of the CEDS data standards and use of geo-mapping or other methods to ensure access to DLLs
- ◇ inclusion of home language as an eligibility criterion for state pre-k or offering universal access
- ◇ using acceptable methods for identifying and placing DLLs based on systematic and valid assessment of home language and English proficiency
- ◇ implementation of state-sponsored methods to improve teacher and leader professional development regarding best practices for DLLs
- ◇ program evaluation and monitoring that includes administration of classroom assessments of teacher supports for DLLs that are based on the best practices (see below)
- ◇ inclusion of DLL best practices as criteria in

the state QRIS

- ◇ specific policy guidance aimed to increase dual language instruction in P-3 classrooms
- ◇ requirement that programs and districts have DLL improvement plans and have developed continuity of education P-3
- ◇ guidance and regulations that support language minority parents' engagement in their child's learning
  
- ◆ Design (or adapt an existing) classroom assessment tool and related professional development resources (workshop modules, video exemplars, teacher self assessment and coaching protocols) based on the best practices guidance. Develop and fund an effort similar to that of the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL). CSEFEL has developed resources such as those listed above to support implementation of the Positive Behavioral Interventions Supports to support social emotional development and work with children with challenging behaviors. One target of this initiative should be early



childhood education faculty.

- ◆ Sponsor a working group of the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS-SDE) possibly through the federally funded Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) to advise and be informed by the expert group on best practices. NAECS-SDE is an important player in state and federal policy for P-3

since the members typically work in offices that oversee educational policy and practice for this entire age span. In our experience, few of them have expertise in bilingual education. One charge to the working group could be to develop a position statement on serving young DLLs such as The Power of Kindergarten: 10 Policies Leading to Positive Child Outcomes.



## Conclusion

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ith the increasing numbers of DLLs in ECE settings it is essential that researchers, practitioners, and policy makers continue to expand knowledge about early bilingual development and learning. From a developmental perspective, research, policy and practice have not conformed neatly into a cohesive framework that can be of benefit for better understanding and promoting bilingual development and learning in early childhood. The Summit’s intent was to broaden and deepen the view of competencies to include aspects that are particularly of interest in the service of all DLLs. To that end, we have identified “what we know about” and “what we should do” through an expanded discussion around the key components of an emerging agenda that identifies and takes into consideration key elements/contexts of the DLL experience. This emerging agenda is intended to help us better understand the integrated development and early learning knowledge base, identify gaps in knowledge,

as well as determine factors that need to be taken into consideration when designing, conducting, and implementing practices and related policies that could address issues of equity in the early education of DLLs.



To support the growing DLL population, ECE teachers must be prepared with the additional qualities, knowledge, and skills specific to young learners developing in two languages simultaneously. The curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices used in ECE settings should be those that have been proven essential for the success of bilingual learners. Finally, we suggest foundations must promote new development and research endeavors that move away from comparison models and towards efforts that aim to understand the specific complexities and uniqueness of the experience of DLLs.

**Helping America's Dual Language Learners Succeed:  
A Research-based Agenda for Action**

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