



The Early Learning and Care Context for Dual Language Learners in California

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Initial findings from the First 5 California-funded Dual Language Learner Pilot Study indicate that overall beliefs about bilingualism and policies in place to support dual language learners (DLLs) are shifting in a direction that promotes the development of young DLLs' bilingualism. However, there are still systemic challenges that limit implementation of high-quality instruction for DLLs. This first research brief from the statewide study of the learning contexts, supports, and outcomes for California DLLs and their families summarizes the perspectives of county-level leaders on the context, challenges, and guidance for DLL caregivers in their counties, which in turn impact practices in the classroom. This brief also offers examples of successful practices to support DLLs in their communities and concludes with implications and next steps for the study.

Introduction

Across the United States, a growing number of young children have an opportunity to grow up bilingual. Young dual language learners (DLLs), defined as children birth to age 5 who are learning another language in addition to English, represent one of the fastest growing populations in the United States (Park, O'Toole, & Katsiaficas, 2017), and California is home to more DLLs than any other state (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2015). Nearly 60% of children birth to age 5 in California are DLLs (Holtby, Lordi, Park, & Ponce, 2017). **To what extent are we maximizing the potential of these young DLLs by supporting their learning and development through California's early learning system?** This is the focus of the First 5 California DLL Pilot Study—a statewide study funded by First 5 California and conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and its partners.

Maximizing the Benefits of Bilingualism

Studies confirm there are benefits to developing bilingualism, but questions remain about how early learning and care programs, systems, and policies can best support dual language development in young children. A growing body of research highlights the cognitive, social, cultural, and academic benefits of bilingualism for today's children, and the early childhood period is ideal for developing bilingualism (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2017). We also know that the



long-term academic benefits of bilingualism are greatest for those children who have solid foundations in both languages (Thompson, 2017). A strong mastery of the home language affords children developmental advantages for learning a second language, as well as for academic achievement (McCabe et al., 2013).

Despite the evidence that developing bilingualism can be a significant asset, there is no clear consensus on the specific interventions, practices, and strategies that work best to support learning outcomes for DLLs (Buysse, Peisner-Feinberg, Páez, Hammer, & Knowles, 2014), and guidance about supports for infants and toddlers is even more limited (NASEM, 2017). In addition, the rapid growth in the number of DLLs in the United States during the past several decades has raised questions

about the capacity of early education systems to adequately support the learning and development of this population of young learners, particularly given the substantial gaps in academic achievement that have been documented among DLLs prior to kindergarten and that persist into the later grades (Espinosa, 2013; Kena et al., 2016). **California, with a significant and growing population of young DLLs, has an opportunity and a responsibility to identify and implement policies and practices that effectively support DLLs' language and academic development.**

The DLL Pilot Study

The First 5 California DLL Pilot Study is a statewide study of the learning contexts, supports, and outcomes for DLLs and their families and is designed to inform policy and programmatic decisions about DLL services. The purpose of the study is to describe the range and distribution of strategies being used in diverse early learning and care (ELC) settings across the state and to identify the strategies that best support positive outcomes for DLLs. The study is being conducted in three phases: (1) the Background Study is a descriptive study of the DLL policies, practices, and approaches in use throughout the state; (2) the In-Depth Study will examine the relationships between strategies and child and family outcomes in order to identify best practices; and (3) the Expansion phase will explore the challenges and factors that may facilitate the expansion and scale-up of best practices. The study goals are to explore effective and feasible practices for DLLs in ELC settings in terms of instructional practices, professional development, and family engagement and to disseminate findings about best practices to relevant stakeholders and practitioners.

This Brief

As a first step in the study, this research brief explores the policy context, workforce development efforts, and instructional supports in the study's 16 counties—to better understand the landscape of policies and supports for DLLs in the state. Understanding these policies and supports is critical, because they impact what teachers and caregivers are able to do in the classroom to support DLLs' development. Data for this research brief come from interviews with key stakeholders from the study's 16 counties, including nearly 100 respondents from First 5 county commission offices, resource and referral agencies,

county offices of education, professional development providers, as well as local organizations directly serving DLLs in ELC settings. The aim of the interviews, conducted in summer and fall of 2018, was to identify the supports available locally to early learning sites—provided by counties, the state, or other agencies—as well as the challenges counties face in supporting sites, and what lessons could be learned. The study team analyzed the data using qualitative coding procedures, summarizing text by topic and highlighting emerging themes. The analytical framework was developed based on key state and federal policy guidance for DLLs in ELC. Based on this analysis, we present current perspectives on needs, supports, and challenges for serving DLLs in ELC settings in California.

This brief focuses on the policy context, teacher preparation and ongoing professional development, and strategies used in early learning settings to support young DLLs. Family support for home language development is discussed as it relates to these topics; however, future briefs will explore family engagement and strategies to support home language more fully. The findings presented here provide information about the contexts for serving DLLs in the study's 16 sampled counties, setting the stage for further analysis in the next phase of the study.

Key Findings

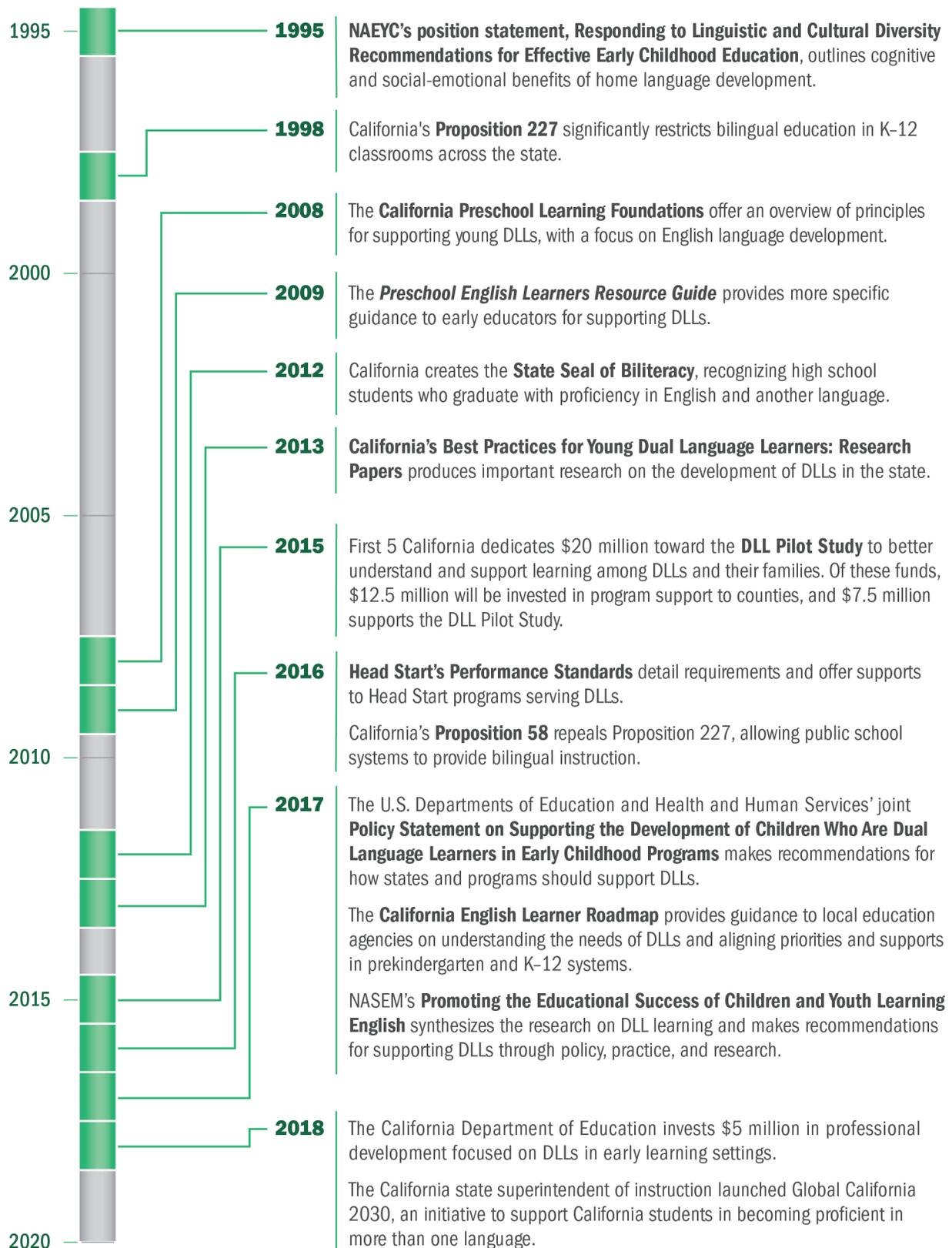
Shifting Policies and Views on Bilingualism

The DLL policy landscape in California has evolved throughout the past 20 years, from the passage of Proposition 227 in 1998, which dismantled bilingual instruction in public schools, to its reversal in 2016 with Proposition 58, allowing the reinstatement of bilingual programs in the K–12 system. Exhibit 1 presents a timeline of policies and programs affecting DLLs since the mid-1990s. Although not directly regulating instruction in early learning settings, these two ballot initiatives both set the tone for practice across systems and reflect the changing values of the electorate.

Early learning stakeholders interviewed across the 16 counties noted similar views that bilingualism is an asset. They also noted that the value placed on bilingualism and the supports provided to promote that value vary somewhat by community. Certainly, the research on the benefits of bilingualism has begun to penetrate the field at the top levels, and nearly all county stakeholders interviewed reported that they view bilingualism as an asset and understand the important work of ELC providers in responding to the unique needs of DLLs. DLLs are *“an asset for whatever early childhood program they are in,”* noted one First 5 county staff member, adding that educators can best help *“by strengthening [children’s] home language and home culture”* so that children can become bilingual and biliterate.

During the past 10 years, early educators have seen the introduction of a range of resources to guide their approach to supporting DLLs, such as the *California Preschool Learning Foundations* in 2008, which offered guidance on English language development, and the *Preschool English Learners Resource Guide* in 2009, which provided more specific tools for teachers to use with DLLs. More recently, the *California English Learner Roadmap* provided guidance to administrators on aligning priorities and supports across

Exhibit 1. Timeline



prekindergarten and K–12 systems. And NASEM’s 2017 synthesis of research on DLL learning provided a trusted resource for addressing learners from the ELC through K–12 systems. County stakeholders cited each of these documents as central to shaping practices in early learning settings.

Several county stakeholders, however, noted a challenge to changing deeply held beliefs among families of DLLs. Wanting to ensure their children’s success, and amid economic pressures, an uncertain political climate, and their own past experiences in school, parents often prioritize the development of English proficiency for their children. But this priority may come at the expense of home language maintenance and the development of bilingualism.



The support of California’s governor and current state education leaders and the gradual shift in belief systems, which county leaders described, are important steps to ensuring that DLLs have the opportunities they need to reach their potential. But instructional programs that meet children’s learning needs, the workforce capacity to implement these programs, and data and accountability systems to support this work are critical to achieving this goal.

Supporting Workforce Development

An effective system to support young DLLs relies on a well-trained workforce prepared to deliver high-quality instruction. In a joint policy statement, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education (2017) recommend that all staff have a firm understanding of DLL development and how to provide linguistically and culturally responsive services to the families they serve. Unfortunately, ELC teachers are typically not adequately prepared to work with DLLs, and more efforts are needed to intentionally support teachers’ skills in this area (Oliva-Olson, Estrada, & Edyburn, 2017).

Respondents from the counties in our sample echoed these themes, noting the need for greater teacher knowledge of best practices, knowledge of second language acquisition, and the need for instructional resources to serve DLLs. County respondents highlighted a range of initiatives in place to support the ELC workforce at the state and local levels, through (1) teacher preparation and coursework, (2) ongoing professional development, and (3) communities of practice.

Teacher Preparation

Most early educators in California will serve DLLs in their classrooms and should be adequately prepared with the knowledge and resources to do so effectively. Early educators in California currently are required to have either a child development permit or a teaching credential issued by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, but there are no statewide requirements to specifically prepare educators to work with DLLs. This is a concern given the high percentage of DLLs across the state.

Interviews revealed some intentional local efforts are in place to prepare teachers who will be working with DLLs. One county respondent described a local community college that offers coursework and a

CASE EXAMPLE: Facilitating Linguistic and Cultural Matches

Sacramento County—Collaborative Refugee Family Child Care Microenterprise Project

Through funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Action, Inc., in partnership with Opening Doors, Inc., offered an innovative program that helped recruit and train members of the refugee community to be ELC providers. For 5 years, from October 2013 through September 2018, Child Action, Inc., trained recently arrived refugee women, most of whom had been in the country for fewer than 2 years and were predominantly Arabic and Farsi speaking. These individuals received training and support, in their home languages, to become early childhood providers who could work with children of their same language and cultural background. The goal of the program was to create an opportunity for economic self-sufficiency in the refugee community through small business development, because family child care providers operate as small businesses, and by increasing language and cultural matches between providers and children in that community. With this program in place, refugee families could enter the workforce with confidence that their children were being cared for by culturally competent providers. A total of 92 program participants became licensed as family child care home providers during the program's 5-year period. Considering California's comprehensive licensure process, with very little material and resources available in these participants' home language, this innovative example highlights how speaking a language other than English is viewed as an asset and how the local efforts can help create a more diverse workforce prepared to serve DLLs.

specialization in diversity and dual language learning, although this coursework is not required for all teachers. A respondent in another county mentioned the availability of a teaching credential offered by the local state college that includes content about different classroom language models. The credential currently offers two pathways: one pathway for teachers working with Spanish speakers and one pathway for teachers working with Hmong speakers.

Some efforts are also being made to target recruitment and preparation of potential educators in populations that match the demographics of the children served in the communities. For example, in one county, stakeholders reported recruiting and training providers among refugee populations to ensure a cultural and linguistic match for children in their communities (see box for more details).

Ongoing Professional Development

Stakeholders in almost all counties described ongoing professional development and training opportunities related to DLLs, but opportunities varied in terms of the level of attention given to instructional strategies specifically aimed at supporting DLL learning. Respondents from several counties described professional development opportunities specifically focused on teaching DLLs. However, respondents in other counties reported that the importance of supporting DLLs may come up as a topic in general training sessions, but in-depth DLL-specific training is not offered. DLL-related professional development offerings varied across counties in terms of content and format; the topics of professional development were typically determined by teacher input, needs and context of programs, and/or funders' priorities. Some of the more common topics for professional development mentioned by stakeholders include the following:

- **Importance of the home language and bilingualism.** Professional development and coaching sessions for DLLs sometimes include discussions that help staff understand and respect the importance of the home language or learn what the research says about the

benefits of bilingualism. These discussions also may provide guidance on how to set up a classroom environment that reflects these values. Some counties mentioned that these DLL-specific discussions are integrated into general professional development opportunities, rather than being the sole topic of the professional development.

- **Cultural sensitivity and competency.** Some staff receive information or engage in discussions about ways to increase cultural awareness and sensitivity, such as understanding cultural norms of the children and families at their site.
- **Instructional strategies for DLLs.** In some counties, teachers receive training on DLL-specific instructional strategies (e.g., vocabulary development, oral language supports), which are often based on guidance documents, such as the *Preschool English Learners Resource Guide* and *California English Learner Roadmap*, or a specific program (e.g., POLL, SEAL, Preschool GLAD, Seeds of Learning, TALLK). A few counties mentioned training providers on instructional strategies, within specific curricula, for teachers who do not speak the home language of the DLLs in their classrooms.



Many interviewees also described coaching opportunities for teachers, to follow up on trainings. These coaching opportunities also varied in the extent to which content was specifically focused on DLLs. One stakeholder commented, after describing how staff were trained repeatedly on dual language practices and strategies, *“People know that we need to support children who are dual language learners in the best way we can . . . so that knowledge base is there, but it doesn’t always translate to practice.”* Coaching is intended to provide that guidance on application.

A few counties also described initiatives within their own communities that leverage the strengths and competencies of their diverse local populations to bolster and prepare the ELC workforce through trainings offered in the home language. For example, two counties discussed their agencies’ work to intentionally hire trainers and coaches who speak the home language of the providers in the community, to be able to deliver training in providers’ home language. These efforts clearly demonstrate the value placed on the home language for providers’ own learning and professional development. One stakeholder explained, *“Teachers can think critically better in their home language if they are a long-term English learner or if they learned English later in life. If our coaches speak the same language, they can help them create goals around their professional development in their home language, and we can support that in coaching in their home language as well.”*

Interviewees in a few counties mentioned efforts to build capacity at the leadership level, through offering professional development opportunities for coaches, site leaders, and other supervisory school staff, acknowledging that these individuals need the background knowledge and competencies to effectively support their staff in implementing best practices for DLLs. For example, a stakeholder in one county using the SEEDS curriculum reflected that they are *“not just training the teachers . . . but teaching and training some of our supervisors. We have a group of regional directors that supervise a group of centers to teach them how to be coaches . . . [which] allows them to engage in the coaching model.”*

CASE EXAMPLES: Building Communities of Practice

■ **Central Valley Dual Language Consortium—Fresno.**

The Dual Language Consortium includes county-level and district-level representatives, including representation from birth to higher education, from Fresno, Merced, and Bakersfield. This collaboration created a “united force” that works together to support DLLs—everyone is on the same page in their approach to supporting these children and their families. Focus areas of the consortium include advocacy, recruitment and expansion of DLL English language learner teachers, coherence between 0-5 and K-12, resource sharing, expansion of bilingual schools, family engagement, and professional development.

■ **Curriculum Collaboration Meetings—Santa Barbara.**

Monthly curriculum collaboration meetings within one district in Santa Barbara provide preschool teachers with time to discuss with each other and embed in their lesson plans and activities an explicit focus on supporting DLLs. This example demonstrates a commitment to supporting the workforce in developing ideas and innovative strategies together as they intentionally plan their instruction for DLLs.

■ **Professional Learning Community—San Francisco.**

This DLL professional learning community was launched by a coach for classroom teachers and paraprofessionals in 11 classrooms in the district/county. The professional learning community meets four times a year and discusses issues related to serving DLLs.

■ **Quality Improvement Plan Community of Practice—**

Santa Clara. This community of practice opportunity is offered for both administrators and practitioners and includes family child care homes in its efforts. Such efforts allow for discussion across levels and settings within the ELC workforce community and for more integration and coherency across efforts.

An interviewee in another county mentioned training for county-level administrators as well; in this case, the local Child Care Planning Council received training from Carola Oliva-Olson, a nationally recognized expert on DLL strategies.

Communities of Practice

Finally, **some stakeholders also described communities of practice and/or professional learning communities in their counties to support the implementation of best practices and approaches for DLLs.** These opportunities offer supports for various individuals involved across the system to convene; discuss success stories, needs, and challenges; and strategize together on how to best serve DLLs. County stakeholders reported engaging in diverse efforts, such as county-level agency groups, communities of practice related to QRIS (quality rating and improvement system), curriculum collaboration meetings, and routine meetings of contracted providers, which demonstrates a commitment to a more integrated system of approaches and supports for DLLs.

Challenges and Next Steps in Workforce Development

Although there are a number of local concerted efforts to prepare the workforce to better serve DLLs, county stakeholders highlighted several important challenges regarding adequate training and professional development that remain.

On a systemic level, **dual language coursework or preparation is not a requirement for providers**, which has led to a lack of consistency in educators’ preparation levels and a gap in knowledge for many providers who do not have access to these opportunities. Closely tied with challenges in workforce preparation is the minimal compensation of ELC staff, which makes it difficult to expect staff to receive high-quality preparation and continued professional development experiences that will lead to a deep level of understanding of DLL development and education.

In addition, there are **various limitations in the extent to which training addresses diverse settings, languages, and ages**. For example, there are few trainers who speak the languages of ELC staff. Stakeholders also mentioned a lack of training for staff in unlicensed settings, including family, friend, and neighbor care, because these settings fall outside of their contract scope to deliver trainings. Finally, very few counties mentioned supports for infant-toddler teachers which may be due, in part, to a lack of research on effective practices for DLLs in this age group.

With respect to the training that is available, **there are few supports for teachers related to language use in the classroom**. The extent to which teachers are being trained on how to use the home language, which research shows is important for supporting both home language development and English acquisition (Barnett et al., 2007; Duran, Roseth & Hoffman, 2010; Farver, Lonigan & Eppe, 2009; Méndez, Crais, Castro, & Kainz 2015; Restrepo, Morgan, & Thompson 2013), varies among counties. In addition, although stakeholders in a few counties mentioned specifically providing support to DLL teachers who do not speak children's home languages (e.g., training on the Personalized Oral Language Learning [POLL] strategies), other stakeholders mentioned how difficult it can be to help teachers who do not speak the home language of DLLs to effectively support children's development, given that many evidence-based practices require the use of children's home language.

Finally, a remaining challenge that counties consistently reported was a lack of funding for professional development. Acknowledging this challenge and demonstrating its commitment to supporting educator development, in 2018, the California Department of Education invested \$5 million in grants to six grantees to provide additional DLL-specific training throughout the state. This investment is aimed at improving the infrastructure for training about DLLs and making training available to educators and providers working with DLLs.

INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES MENTIONED BY STAKEHOLDERS

Sobrato Early Academic Language Model (SEAL), developed in California and used in Los Angeles and Santa Clara Counties, is a model for prekindergarten through third grade that focuses on language and literacy support for DLLs through academic content themes and relies on an intensive professional development for teachers.

Preschool Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) is an early education model developed by the Orange County Department of Education and adopted from the Preschool GLAD K-12 model, which focuses on creating language rich environments for DLLs.

Personalized Oral Language(s) Learning (POLL) is a set of strategies developed in Fresno County in collaboration with DLL expert Linda Espinosa, which focus on three key areas: family engagement, environmental supports, and conversation and interaction.

Soy Bilingüe, which is used in San Francisco County, emphasizes culturally responsive teaching to support young learners' multilingual development; teachers are trained on this approach through a 5-day training.

Teachers Acquiring Language Learning Knowledge (TALLK) is a teacher training program developed in Sonoma County that combines initial training with follow-up observations and in-the-moment coaching for teachers to support language development of DLLs.

SEEDS of Learning is a professional development program for teachers used in Santa Clara County and is focused on developing interactions and relationships to foster social-emotional, language, and literacy development of young children.



Selecting Instructional Approaches for DLLs

Identifying evidence-based instructional practices aligned with the learning needs of DLLs is critical to improving learning outcomes for these children. Because ELC programs are administered through a combination of federal, state, and local-level agencies, instructional programming varies greatly by program and funding stream (Melnick, Tinubu, Gardner, Maier, & Wechsler, 2017). Given that policies and practices for ELC differ from program to program, it is not surprising that approaches to serving DLLs also vary. In contrast to the K–12 system, which is guided by content standards and state assessments aligned with those standards, there are no overarching accountability measures that drive instruction in all ELC programs. Instructional

decisions for this age group are guided by a range of factors; in some cases, the funding stream sets out instructional guidelines to which programs must adhere (e.g., Head Start), although, in other cases, local or site-based leaders establish the instructional approach.

In addition, **the extent to which ELC programming aligns with research, policies, and practices of K–12 systems varies.** At the state level, the California Department of Education offers guidance through two key documents, the *Preschool English Learners Resource Guide* and the *Preschool Learning Foundations*. Interview respondents reported that sites rely on these guidance documents, which emphasize the importance of developing the home language and recognize the benefits of bilingualism, despite their publication during a time when bilingual education was not permitted in K–12 classrooms. The extent to which ELC sites incorporate bilingual education, however, varies by program.

Because decisions about instructional approaches in California ELC programs are often driven by local priorities and leadership, stakeholders reported wide variation within their counties. As a result, home-grown programs and approaches, often with a research base, have developed in some parts of the state. To understand the range of programs and approaches used to serve DLLs in ELC programs, we asked county stakeholders if their agencies endorse or recommend a specific program or approach for supporting DLLs in classrooms. Stakeholder responses varied in specificity and intentionality, from broad or high-level statements to endorsements of specific programs and curricula. For example, stakeholders from three counties described instruction in broad terms, stating that they “*follow very closely the protocols, the publications, [and] practices that are rolled out from the California Department of Education.*” Stakeholders from other counties mentioned a variety of specific programs, curricula, or approaches utilized within their counties to support DLLs (see text box).

Similarly, some counties reported the use of specific, defined language models such as the 50/50, 90/10, or 80/20 dual language models, in which educators use specific proportions of home language and English instruction during the program. Other counties responded with a more general approach, such as that described by one stakeholder: “*So, we really just ebb and flow in and out of English and Spanish, as necessary, to support kids and learning.*” Participants noted that the use of home language

instruction depends on the availability of qualified staff who speak the same home language as the children to deliver curriculum.

Some of the key factors shaping instructional program choices reported by county stakeholders include community demographics, availability of staff who speak a particular language, leadership priorities, and system-level influences such as alignment with K–12. Three counties described research-based curricular approaches that grew out of their counties’ contexts. For example, Orange County Department of Education developed and supports Preschool GLAD, which follows the *California Preschool Learning Foundations* (2008). Sonoma County developed TALLK, which has been supported by First 5 Sonoma County for many years. Finally, Fresno County has an interagency collaboration, which supports the POLL strategies that are based on Linda Espinosa’s (2014) work.

Other counties noted either the influence of or tension with the local K–12 system impacting instructional decisions. In one county, a stakeholder described how ELC instructional program choices were influenced by the local school district goals and priorities, with ELC programs often following the lead of the school district and implementing the curricular approach of the district. In another county, however, participants noted a tension between ELC providers and the school district—the ELC providers and the district differ in their approaches and beliefs about when to introduce English and how much English versus home language to use in instruction.

Challenges and Next Steps in Instructional Approaches

Although the lack of statewide accountability for DLLs in ELC programs offers flexibility to adapt to local demands and contexts, there is a clear range in the level of intentionality for instructional choices to support DLLs. Although, in some cases, specific local efforts of key programmatic leaders or administrators have developed particular approaches (e.g., TALLK in Sonoma), other areas follow general statewide guidance or follow the lead of district-level decisions. Alignment with K–12 remains an issue for ELC programs generally, but it is of special concern when trying to align language approaches for DLLs.

In addition, **stakeholders in more than half of the participating counties noted that communicating about instructional options to families and convincing them to invest in home language development was a challenge.** Although many programs aimed to develop bilingualism for children, families themselves are concerned with their children developing English proficiency. As stated by one stakeholder, “Our

CASE EXAMPLE: Local Leadership

An administrator in one county agency described supporting instructional decisions for preschool in the community. The administrator began by assessing the community needs and determining where and how to align the language of instruction for preschool with the community languages and with the language of instruction that is utilized in the corresponding elementary school. The administrator then provided support for teachers in the form of materials, resources, and professional development for supporting bilingual programs. The administrator described one of the guiding principles for instructional decision making: *“We really want our children to feel comfortable, safe in their learning environment; [so initially we use] more of their first language. And as [the children] get more and more comfortable in bringing on a second language and hearing a second language, then we will add more of the concepts, skill, direction, and communication in two languages.”*

families have learned, or they believe that society's telling us that our kids have to learn English. So even if somebody offers them a program of bilingualism, they're like, 'No, because that's going to hold my child back.' Because of their own personal experiences, they don't want that for their children. They feel the way out of poverty—the way for their children to succeed—is learning English.” Thus, ensuring that DLLs receive high-quality instruction involves not only the development of guidelines and accountability for instruction but also requires communication efforts to inform families about the benefits of bilingualism. In Los Angeles County, one organization (Californians Together) recently began a social media campaign to dispel myths and improve families’ understanding of the benefits of developing bilingualism and biliteracy in their children. This organization is specifically targeting parents who are in the process of making decisions about what types of programs to enroll their preschool children in (Californians Together, n.d.).

Using Data to Support DLLs

Early educators and leaders need good information about the children they are serving and about their strengths and learning needs to best support their learning and maximize their potential, including being able to identify DLLs, assess their learning, and monitor their progress. Identifying DLLs is the first step in working to ensure that the learning needs of these children are met (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, 2017). County stakeholders noted that many programs in California use a brief parent survey to identify children who are DLLs and to determine their home language. But other programs rely on teacher judgement for this information. A few county administrators worried that **relying on teacher judgement to identify DLLs results in underreporting of DLLs and inaccurate data, but guidance related to how to obtain an accurate count of DLLs is limited.**

ELC programs, even when they accurately identify DLLs, typically do not collect sufficient data to monitor their progress. Because programs are not specifically required to track DLLs’ learning in their home language and do not have to report outcomes for children by language group, there is little emphasis on collecting accurate data about DLLs and tracking their progress comprehensively. Other barriers to data collection identified by county stakeholders include a lack of appropriate tools and assessments to adequately measure learning in other languages.

Even when data are collected on DLLs, the data are not collected in a consistent manner across systems and programs throughout the state—or even within counties—making monitoring across systems more difficult. For example, Head Start has a set of data-reporting requirements, Title 5 programs have a different set of requirements, and Quality Counts California (QCC) has another set of quality criteria and reporting requirements. One county stakeholder noted that, although not required at the state level, programs involved in QCC in the stakeholder’s county collect detailed data about the DLLs they serve; thus, more is known about DLLs in these programs. However, because QCC programs reflect a small proportion of the overall ELC landscape in that county, much remains unknown about children served in non-QCC settings. Finally, the lack of a unique child identifier, which would enable systems to track children into the K–12 system through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System and link school readiness and later academic progress to ELC experiences, further restricts knowledge and accountability for ELC programs.

Despite these challenges, some programs and systems in California have made progress on improving tools and measures to identify DLLs and to evaluate their progress.

A few county respondents reported on the commitment of some programs and agencies to collect more comprehensive data to understand the needs of DLLs and to provide targeted support to them. For example, one county stakeholder described using a comprehensive language survey to capture family languages, including information about use of the home language by the child and the child's parents, as well as exposure to languages spoken by other individuals in the household and in the community. The survey also explores the parents' feelings about maintaining the home language. This detailed survey is intended not only to collect more accurate information about DLLs but also to help inform an intentional approach whereby teachers know how and when to use the home language in the classroom. Another county stakeholder reported that her county is working toward creating unique identifiers for children under 5 years of age to link data from assessments used in early childhood, such as the Desired Results Developmental Profile and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, to inform program evaluation and progress monitoring.



Partnerships with research institutions such as universities have strengthened work in some counties to monitor the progress of DLLs and reflect a commitment to determining whether particular strategies or programs help meet the needs of DLLs. For example, in one county, a Head Start grantee has been partnering with a university on a multiyear research study on children's receptive and expressive vocabulary in the home language; the study will, among other purposes, help the program determine teaching strategies to bolster both English and home language development. These examples of local efforts to improve measures and analysis of learning outcomes for DLLs hold promise for strengthening the accountability system and the use of data to support DLL learning and outcomes.

Implications and Discussion

California's early care and education system bears a tremendous responsibility for providing foundational early learning experiences for a diverse, multilingual population of children. Given young children's capacity to learn more than one language simultaneously, especially in the early years (NAEM, 2017), the early learning system has a prime opportunity to support dual language learning for California's young children. This brief has explored how statewide policies and resources and county-level approaches support early learning settings to maximize the potential for DLLs.

California has had a turbulent history with conflicting beliefs and policies about the use of home language in the classroom to support DLLs, especially in the K–12 sector. But statewide policies and resources have become more supportive of home language use, and communities across California are reporting a shift in their thinking about supports for DLLs. Many early care and education leaders recognize the value of bilingualism and demonstrate an increasing interest in effectively supporting the development of DLLs in early learning settings. However, the extent to which practices and systems are in place to effectively support DLLs in ELC settings varies across the state and from program to program.



Interviews with county stakeholders revealed challenges as well as examples of important achievements around the state. ELC administrators are working toward strengthening the system of support for DLLs through coordination of collection and use of data about DLLs. ELC stakeholders in some areas reported adopting innovative approaches to preparing the ELC workforce and implementing best practices and recommendations outlined in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education (2017) and California guidance documents for serving young DLLs. Numerous agencies across and within ELC systems in California are proactively developing local initiatives that reflect a commitment to serving DLLs, convening stakeholders to discuss how to support ELC professionals to work with

DLLs, and demonstrating a recognition that intentional efforts are needed to adequately support DLL children and their families.

However, a lack of coherence and integration of efforts across systems, counties, and the state remain roadblocks to consistent implementation of practices for DLLs. Although the state offers guidance documents on serving DLLs, there are no universal requirements for providers to have a foundational understanding of language acquisition for DLLs or best practices for serving DLLs in pre- or in-service training. The extent to which sites identify, assess, and monitor progress on language development for DLLs also varies by funding stream (e.g., Head Start, State Preschool, private) and is limited by a lack of DLL-specific measures and tools to monitor instruction and learning for DLLs. Finally, sites face limitations in resources and capacity to serve DLLs, noting a range of issues such as lack of bilingual staff, inadequate pay for teachers, and limited availability of culturally and linguistically responsive curricular materials.

This brief has explored the range of promising local supports and practices to support DLLs across California. The study's next step is to complete a survey of a representative sample of site directors in the 16 study counties to describe the range of practices in use for DLLs across the state. Much still remains unknown about the extent to which these supports and practices lead to improved outcomes for children and their families. The next phase of the project, the In-Depth Study, will examine how specific strategies in instruction, professional development, and family engagement support positive outcomes for DLL children and their families. The study will consider the use of strategies for different age groups, in different settings, and with children speaking different languages represented in California. Findings from the In-Depth Study about best practices will be disseminated to relevant stakeholders and practitioners to inform policy and programmatic decisions to maximize the potential of young DLLs. First 5 California will also provide funds to counties and programs to implement evidence-based practices. Results from the In-Depth Study will be available in late 2020 or early 2021.

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About the First 5 California DLL Pilot Study

In 2015, First 5 California committed \$20 million for the DLL Pilot to support effective and scalable strategies in early learning and care (ELC) programs to promote learning and development for DLLs and their families. A key component of this overall initiative seeks to describe and evaluate the range of strategies to support DLLs, including three strategies of particular interest: instructional practices, professional development for staff, and family engagement. The study is examining the range of practices, by age, setting type, and diverse language groups, and how various practices are supportive of child and family outcomes. The study includes 16 counties selected to be broadly representative of the state's DLL population: Butte, Calaveras, Contra Costa, Fresno, Los Angeles, Monterey, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Sonoma, Stanislaus, and Yolo. The study is being conducted by AIR and its partners at Juárez & Associates; School Readiness Consulting; Allen, Shea & Associates; and Stanfield Systems, Inc.; with guidance from the DLL Input Group, which comprises stakeholders, advocates, and state and national experts on DLLs.

For more information about the study:

CaliforniaDLLStudy.org

www.ccfca.gov/

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