The Dual Language Learner Landscape: What We Know and What We Need

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What is WIDA Early Years?

WIDA Early Years promotes equitable early care and education (ECE) opportunities for young multilingual children.

- **Teach**: WIDA Early Years provides ECE practitioners key resources and instructional tools to support multilingual children.
- **Standards**: WIDA Early Years promotes language development standards for multilingual children in ECE settings.
- **Partnerships**: WIDA Early Years partners with state education agencies to provide ECE communities access to high-quality tools and resources.
- **Grow**: WIDA Early Years provides professional learning opportunities for ECE practitioners, coaches and program leaders.

Early Years membership provides states access to tools, resources, and services designed to support the unique needs of young multilingual children.
What do we offer?

- Annual State Membership
- State Systems Integration Support
- Professional Learning

Overview

• National Landscape and Demographics
• Identification of Young Children as DLLs
• Instructional practices for DLLs
• State Highlight: Illinois
What informs this presentation?

- 2017: Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English
- 2018: GROWING SUPERDIVERSITY AMONG YOUNG U.S. DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS
- 2018: Understanding Many Languages: Preparing Early Educators to Teach Dual Language Learners
- 2021: Taking Stock of Dual Language Learner Identification and Strengthening Procedures and Policies
- 2020: NIEER Pre-K Data Snapshot: How Pre-K Pre-Kindergarten Programs Succeed in Serving Dual Language Learners
- 2021: Plus, our experience working with states
National Landscape and Demographics
Defining Labels

- Multilingual Children
- Dual Language Learners (DLLs)
- Multilingual Learners
- English Language Learners (ELLs)
- English Learners (ELs)
- Limited English Proficient (LEP)
Multilingual children are...

• Children ages birth to 5 years
• Culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse
• Simultaneously or sequentially learning two or more languages
• Exposed to multiple languages in their homes, communities, and/or early care and education settings

These children develop and use language in dynamic ways.
Various Labels and Definitions

**Ages 0-5, not in PreK-12 system:**

Dual language learners are children learning two (or more) languages at the same time, as well as those learning a second language while continuing to develop their first (or home) language

- ACF and HHS

**Ages 3-21, in PreK-12 system:**

The term English Learner, when used with respect to an individual, means an individual—(A) who is aged 3 through 21; (B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school; (C)(i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; (ii) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and (ii) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual’s level of English language proficiency; or (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and (D) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual—(i) the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards; (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.

- Sec. 8101 of ESEA

**“In its research, MPI defines a DLL as any young child [ages 0-8] who has at least one parent who speaks a language other than English in the home, as recorded in U.S. Census Bureau data.”**

- Migration Policy Institute (2021)

**Federal Definitions**

**Research Definitions**

“There is a lack of consensus among policy makers, practitioners, and researchers on the terminology to be used in relevant policies and practices (NASEM, 2017).”
Why examine labels and definitions?

“The names we use mean something. By looking at children through a monolingual and monoglossic lens and insisting on categorizing them as LEPs or ELLs, the U.S. educational system perpetuates educational inequities and squanders valuables linguistic resources.”
- García (2009)

“The labels placed on students who are acquiring English as an additional language can create mindsets, define opportunities, and determine investments. Labels not only affect how students are educated, they can also influence how students perceive themselves.”
- Santos (2015)
Nearly 1/3 of all children (0-8) on decline.
DLL Demographics: Ages 0-5

National
• 33% of children are DLLs (7.4 million)
• 49% are ages 0-2
• 60% are Latino
• 59% speak Spanish at home
• 95% are U.S. born
• 69% have at least 1 foreign-born parent

Maryland
• 33% of children are DLLs (137,000)
• 49% are ages 0-2
• 46% are Latino
• 48% speak Spanish at home
• 94% are U.S. born
• 82% have at least 1 foreign-born parent

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS), pooled for 2015-19
Source: Migration Policy Institute (2021)
Identification of Young Children as DLLs
What We Know and What We Need

• Gathering and sharing data on DLLs can help ensure they are receiving the services they need

• There is little to no guidance and/or policy at the federal, state and local level

• There is a need to clarify the purpose for identification of DLLs and understand the difference between “DLL” and “EL”

• There is no consensus on how to define English “proficiency” for DLLs
What We Know and What We Need

• There is a critical need for assessment tools that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate

• The ECE workforce is not equipped with the linguistic and cultural competency, knowledge and skills necessary to administer language assessments to DLLs and interpret data

• There is a lack of DLL expertise at state agencies and teacher education programs

• We need more research on assessment of DLLs
MPI’s Framework for DLL Identification

Framework elements:

• Identifying young children who have exposure to a language other than English in their home environment;

• Collecting comprehensive information about DLLs’ language environment and experiences;

• Obtaining in-depth information about DLLs’ individual language and preliteracy skills in English and in their home language(s)

• Making these data and other relevant information accessible to programs and policymakers across early childhood and K-12 systems

Source: Migration Policy Institute (2021)
MPI’s Framework for DLL Identification

Foundational system elements necessary include

- Comprehensive state early childhood data systems aligned with K-12 systems
- Professional development on DLL assessment, instructional needs, and family engagement
- Effective, culturally relevant, and age-appropriate assessments and tools for use with children ages 0-5

Source: Migration Policy Institute (2021)
Recommendation: Use of a Protocol

Emergent Multilingual Learners Language Profile Protocol (NYSED, 2017)

1. Parents complete EMLLP Profile for PreK Students
2. Family interview
3. Child interview
4. Review developmental screenings
5. Plan for instruction

- Protocol is used to develop a linguistic profile of a child
- Protocol does not determine “proficiency”
- Protocol is recommended but not required
- Unclear how widely the protocol is used in preschools

Source: Migration Policy Institute (2021)
Instructional Practices for DLLs
What We Know and What We Need

• Instruction for DLLs must help them master early learning concepts/content and develop English, while supporting their home language development.

• There is a critical need to develop language program models appropriate for DLLs.

• To promote equity for DLLs, we must challenge ideas of “best practice for all.”

• Teachers’ unchecked biases and language ideologies may inform their practice.
What We Know and What We Need

• Teachers must be prepared to adapt their practice to meet the language development needs of DLLs
• Ongoing assessment of DLLs’ learning and language development and two-way communication with families is vital for planning equitable instruction
• We need more research on instructional practices appropriate for DLLs
Benefits of Bilingualism

“Scientific evidence clearly points to a universal, underlying capacity to learn two languages as easily as one. Children who are dual language learners have an impressive capacity to manage their two languages when communicating with others...Recent research evidence also points to cognitive advantages, such as the ability to plan, regulate their behavior, and think flexibly for children and adults who are competent in two languages.”

- NASEM (2017)
State Highlight: Illinois
Identification and Services for DLLs in IL State-Funded Pre-K

An EL student in preschool:

- (a) comes from a home where a language other than English is spoken by the student and/or by the student’s parent, guardians, or anyone else who resides in the household; and

- (b) does not demonstrate English language proficiency during a research-based English language proficiency screening procedure that is developmentally appropriate for the student.

- Home language survey (HLS) must be administered by the 1st day of attendance (2 questions)

  - If “Yes”, then child must be screened for English language proficiency

Source: IL Preschool FAQ (2014)
**State Rules for Screening Procedures**

- Be age and developmentally appropriate;
- Be culturally and linguistically appropriate for the children being screened;
- Include one or more observations using culturally and linguistically appropriate tools;
- Use multiple measures and methods (e.g., home language assessments; verbal and nonverbal procedures; various activities, settings, and personal interactions);
- Involve family by seeking information and insight to help guide the screening process without involving them in the formal assessment or interpretation of results; and
- Involve staff who are knowledgeable about preschool education, child development, and first and second language acquisition.

**Screening procedures may be modified to accommodate the special need of students with IEPs.**

*Source: IL Preschool FAQ (2014)*
Language Instruction Program Models

• Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) Program
  • Must be implemented in attendance centers that enroll 20 or more preschool ELs who have the same home language

• Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) Program
  • Must be implemented in attendance centers that enroll 19 or fewer preschool ELs who have the same home language; TBE can also be offered

• Preschool teachers providing native language/ESL instruction must have the appropriate endorsement or approval

Source: IL Preschool FAQ (2014)