

Dual Language Learner Pilot Study

Findings and Policy Implications

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FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA
Dual Language Learner

PILOT STUDY



Background & Policy Context

- An estimated 60% of children under 5 in California are DLLs (CHIS, 2017)
- There are clear benefits to bilingualism (e.g., NASEM, 2017)
- [Master Plan for Early Learning and Care](#) elevates the importance of supporting DLLs
- California's \$5 million investment in the [DLL-Professional Development Program](#) in 2018

➡ **Need:** *Better understanding of how educators and systems can best support DLLs and their families*



Focus Areas

Instructional
Strategies



Family
Engagement



Professional
Development



Goals of the Study

1. Characterize the **landscape of supports** for DLLs in California
2. Describe the **range and distribution of practices** used in early learning and care settings to support DLLs
3. Examine how those practices **relate to child and family outcomes**
4. Illustrate how promising practices can be **sustained and scaled**



Background
Study



In-Depth
Study

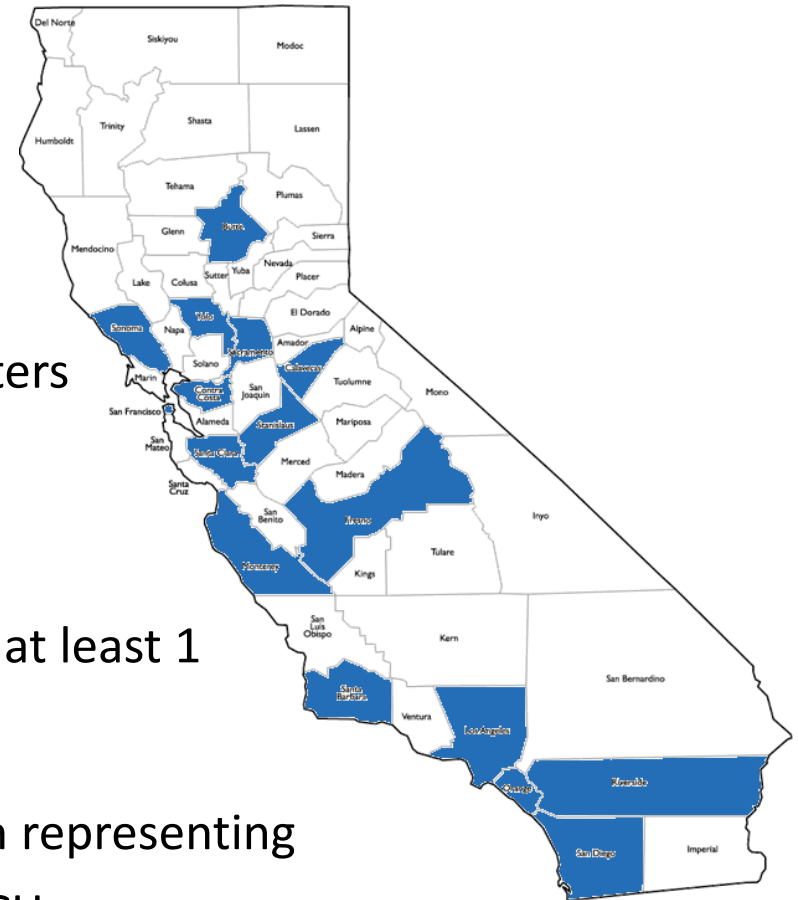


Expansion
Study

Background Study

Characterizing the DLL Landscape

- Interviews with county stakeholders in 16 counties
- State representative survey of nearly 800 early learning program administrators (centers and family child care homes [FCCHs])
- Revealed nearly universal presence of DLLs
 - 98% of centers and 70% of FCCHs served at least 1 DLL in 2019
 - 57% of DLL-serving *centers* serve children representing 3 or more languages, less common in FCCHs



In-Depth Study Sample and Design

- Included **over 2,000 DLLs** in **174 early learning and care programs** in 2019-20
- **All ages:** Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers
- **Multiple languages:** Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese
- **Diverse settings:** Family child care and center-based care; no TK
- **Data sources**
 - Surveys of teachers and parents of DLLs
 - Direct assessments of preschool-aged children on language (English and home language), early literacy, math, executive function
 - Indirect assessments of social-emotional skills (all children) and language and general development (infants and toddlers)

COVID disruptions: No classroom observations or second round of child assessments

Evaluating the Expansion Phase

- 16 counties received funds to expand strategies to support DLLs through:
 - Building teacher knowledge of effective instructional practices
 - Strengthening family engagement strategies
 - Strengthen systemwide commitment to DLLs
- Gathering data on progress through:
 - County interviews
 - Provider focus groups
 - Parent interviews



Key Findings



Commitment to Bilingualism

- **Strong support for bilingualism**
 - Counties reported shifting community attitudes
 - Most program directors value bilingualism and demonstrate some knowledge about dual language learning
 - 88% of parents of DLLs wanted their child to grow up to speak the home language *and English*
- **But there is room for improvement**
 - Fewer than 1 in 5 programs have a formal plan for serving DLLs
 - At least 1/3 of programs in California use English-only instruction



Instruction: Use of the Home Language

More home language use in the classroom



Better performance on preschool outcome measures, even on oral comprehension in *English*.





Instructional Strategies for Preschoolers

- **Promising practices**
 - Use of the home language
 - Books in the home language
 - Use of songs and basic phrases
- **Challenges**
 - Availability of materials
 - Reliable and valid assessments, especially in non-Spanish languages





Home Language Use and Instructional Practice with Infants/Toddlers

Greater English
use & teacher
English
proficiency

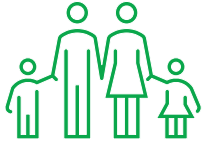


Greater development
overall and in English skills

More Spanish
books

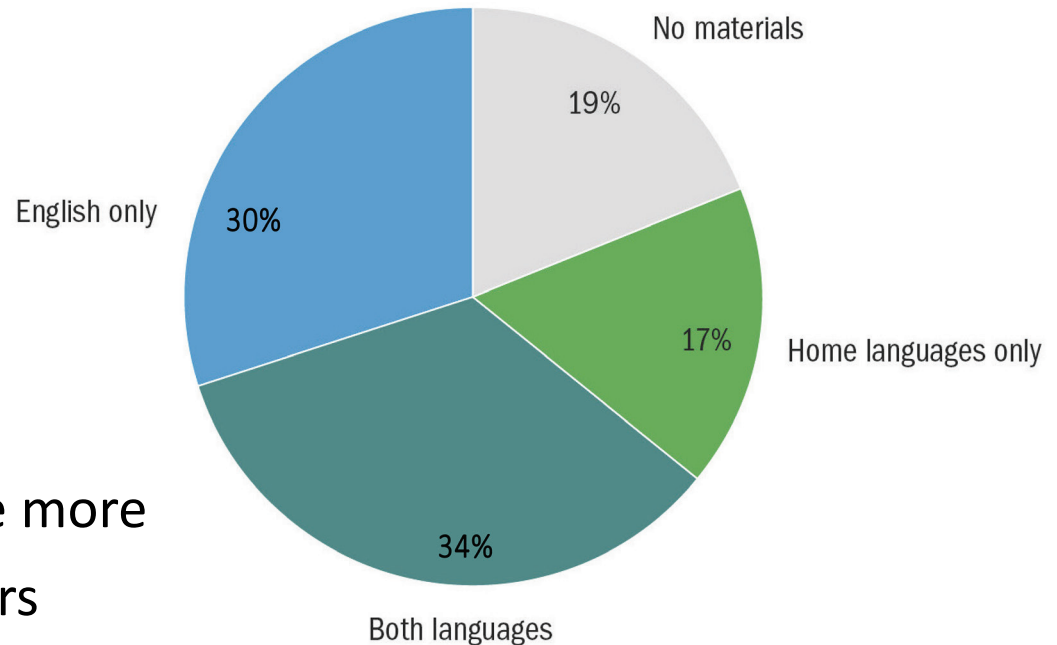


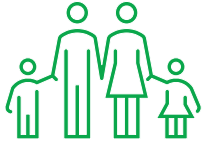
More complexity in
toddlers' Spanish language



Family Engagement

- Most families reported receiving from their program:
 - Communications in their preferred language
 - Positive messages about bilingualism
- 34% of families received home learning materials in English *and* their home language
 - English only materials were more likely to be shared at centers





Family Engagement

Providing positive messages about bilingualism & cultural diversity

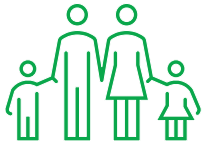


Families value home language skills more as an aspect of school readiness

Providing home learning materials



Families engage in learning activities like reading and counting with child more frequently



Counties Build Family Engagement Through the Expansion Projects

- More than 11,000 families served; 50,000 books distributed
- Activities included workshops, Parent Cafés, family literacy activities, and more informal supports offered by early learning providers.
- Primary lessons learned:
 - Families appreciated *concrete* supports, like books and technology
 - Virtual training worked with families
 - Trusted messengers are critical



Professional Development

- Few early learning programs across the state require staff to receive DLL-focused PD
- Most teachers reported receiving at least *a little* DLL-related PD
- But fewer than 1 in 4 reported receiving *a lot* of PD on any given topic
- Similar patterns in centers and FCCHs





Professional Development

- Teachers who had received more DLL-related PD...
 - had **more favorable attitudes about bilingualism and greater confidence** in their ability to support DLLs
 - were **more likely to use evidence-based instructional practices for teaching DLLs**, including use of the home language for instruction and having books in the home language
 - reported **using a larger number of linguistically and culturally responsive family engagement strategies**
- *Overall, most teachers wanted more PD*



Counties Provide Professional Development Through Expansion Projects

- Most common training content: POLL strategies
- ~2,000 providers—serving ~12,000 children—participated
- In some counties, training included unit-bearing courses
- **What did providers say they learned?**
 - The importance of children growing up bilingual
 - The importance of *educating families* on the benefits of bilingualism
 - New strategies for strengthening home language and vocabulary
 - How to build relationships with families

What First 5 California Might Consider

- Elevate key messages throughout the state (e.g., benefits of bilingualism)
- Continue investments in professional learning for teachers/providers
 - Supports for teachers who do not speak students' home languages
 - Collaboration with community colleges
- Leverage QCC system as a vehicle for strengthening DLL supports
- Support the development and distribution of DLL resources and materials (e.g., books in the home language, assessments)
- Convene conversations to align practices across private early learning programs and TK

For more details, see our briefs on:

- County perspectives on the DLL context
- Statewide landscape for DLLs
- Statewide PD context
- Challenges of assessing DLLs
- Approaches to supporting DLLs
- DLL identification
- Assessing math for DLLs
- Family engagement





Next Steps

- Additional research briefs will be released in the next two months on:
 - Professional development experiences and outcomes for teachers
 - Instructional practices for preschoolers and infants/toddlers
 - DLL families' experiences during COVID
 - Final summary brief

<https://californiadllstudy.org/>



Questions?

