



Upholding the Educational Civil Rights of Multilingual Learners and Families

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Webinar Guest Speaker(s):

- Megan Hopkins, PhD, University of California San Diego;
- Allison Balter, Ed. M., Massachusetts Department of Education

Webinar Overview

States, districts, and schools have a legal and ethical obligation to ensure that all students, regardless of the language(s) they speak at home, have access to meaningful, equitable learning opportunities. Grounded in federal policy and civil rights law, these obligations extend to instructional access, language development supports, family engagement, and nondiscriminatory practices that enable multilingual learners to thrive academically and socially.

In this webinar, policy experts and practitioners will unpack the educational civil rights that protect multilingual learners and their families, clarifying what these rights mean in practice and how they are grounded in existing law and guidance. Participants will also hear directly from a state-level leader about how these civil rights frameworks are being implemented on the ground, highlighting policy levers, practical strategies, and lessons learned that can inform efforts in other contexts.

Join us to deepen your understanding of the civil rights of multilingual learners and the policies, practices, and partnerships essential to upholding them across educational systems:
<https://www.cal.org/upholding-the-educational-civil-rights-of-multilingual-learners-and-families/>

CAL Disclaimer

The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) provides research-informed guidance to support equitable and effective education for multilingual learners. This document is intended for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.



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Key Insights

- Civil rights protections for multilingual learners are grounded in longstanding federal policy and case law.

States have substantial authority to shape how civil rights protections are implemented, monitored, and sustained.

Policy Implications

- States can codify federal protections into state statutes, creating durable safeguards regardless of federal shifts.
- Expanding and protecting bilingual and dual language education is a civil rights strategy, not simply a programmatic choice.
- Community advocacy plays a critical role in shaping and sustaining equitable policy.

Calls to Action

- Use state authority proactively to sustain protections during periods of federal uncertainty.
- Examine whether existing state law explicitly protects multilingual learners' access to meaningful educational opportunities.
- Engage families, advocates, and community-based organizations as partners in policy design and implementation.

Resources

- [TESOL Statement on the Rescission of Guidance on Serving Multilingual Learners of English in U.S. Public Schools](#)
- [Colorín Colorado Federal Policy and Funding for ELL Education: News and Updates](#)
- [State Support for EL Education \(Education Policy Partners\)](#)
- [New York Regulations Concerning English Language Learners and Multilingual Learners](#)
- Massachusetts Resources
 - [Protect Education Equity Act](#)
 - [Resources for Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Students](#)
 - [Language Opportunity for Our Kids \(LOOK\) Act](#)

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