

LIVE WEBINAR

A Comprehensive Literacy Policy for Multilingual Learners: Research and Practice

featuring: **Ester de Jong | Jody Slavick
| Silvia Nogeuron-Liu | Keira
Ballantyne | Diana Mendonza | Erika
Mendoza**

September 22, 2026 | 4 PM ET | ONLINE



Legislating Literacy: Where are multilingual learners?

Keira Ballantyne

A Comprehensive Literacy Policy for Multilingual Learners:

Research and Practice

September 22, 2026

Discourse Context

H The Hill

Reading scores near lowest
point in 25 years



wtwcfox

<https://fox49.tv/news/nation-world/reading-scores...>

US reading scores have dropped a grade level since 2013. ...



YouTube

60.2K+

Aug 20, 2026 — U.S. reading scores have fallen about a grade level since 2013, a decline that began well before COVID-19.

Reading scores PLUNGE as schools stop assigning full books



Children's advocate Karen Vaites reacts to a new report showing students rarely read full books as **reading scores decline nationwide**.



The Washington Post

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2026/05/13>

Kids are in a 'reading recession,' as test scores

May 13, 2026 — What they found was sobering: Only five states plus the D.I. meaningful growth in **reading test scores** from 2022 to 2025. [Read more](#)



U.S. News & World Report

Teen Reading Slumps to Worst This Century Due to Surge in
Screen Time

By Leigh Thomas. PARIS, Sept 8 (Reuters) - Teenagers more accustomed to smartphones than Shakespeare are reading at the worst levels seen...

1 day ago



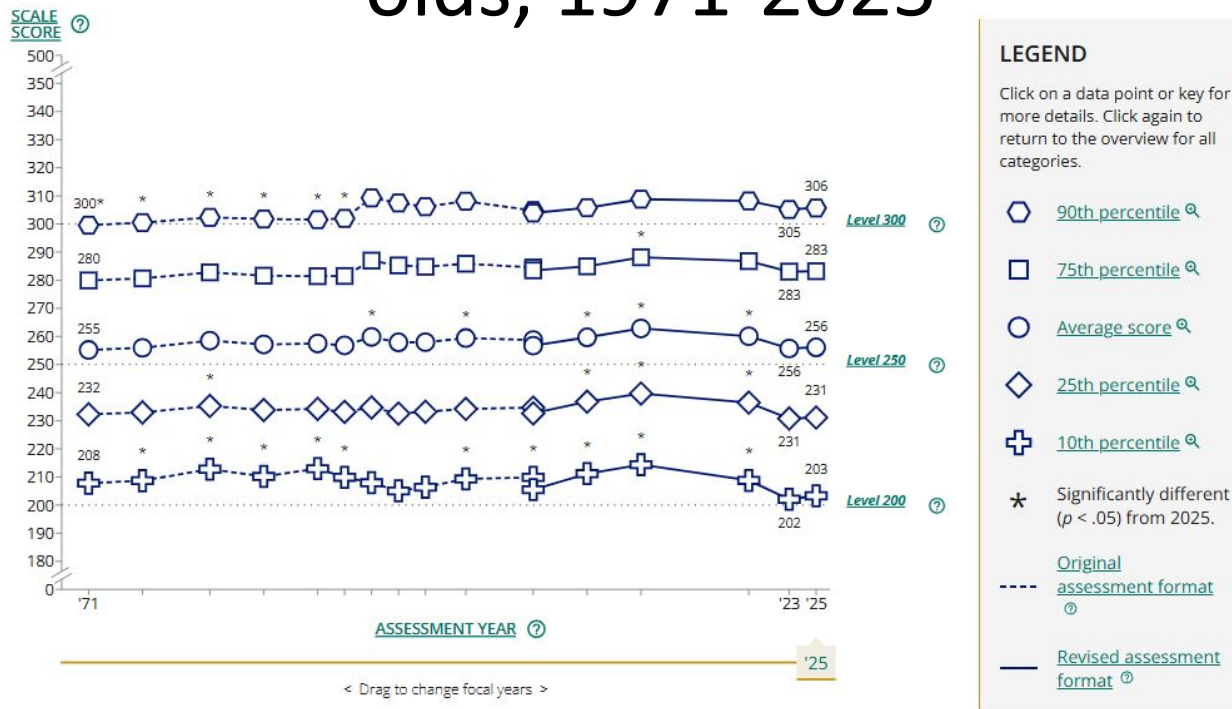
The New York Times

U.S. Reading Scores Plummet on Global
Exam

1 day ago



NAEP Long Term Trends in Reading for 13 year olds, 1971-2025



*Legislating literacy: Where are
multilingual learners?* by Sarah
Marie Howard



CAL RESEARCH BRIEFS

*Legislating Literacy
Instruction: Where are
Multilingual Learners?*

SARAH MARIE HOWARD | OCTOBER 2025



Center for Applied Linguistics

4646 40th St NW, Washington, DC 20016

info@cal.org | 202-362-0700

Analyses of literacy legislation

- Two prior sources indicate 45 states/entities encode literacy instruction in legislation (The Reading League (n.d.) and Education Week (2024))
- Systematic keyword searches to evaluate the inclusion of multilingual learners

Language

Language learner

English learner

English language learner

Multilingual

Multilingual Learner

English language learner

Limited English Proficient

***Disclaimer:** While every effort was made to ensure accuracy of information at the time of publication, legislation may change over time, and audience members are encouraged to verify that information continues to be accurate.

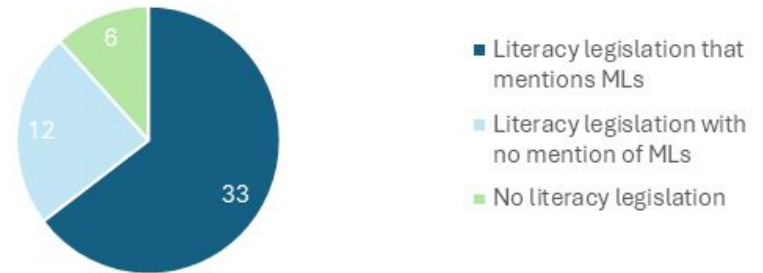
No Mention of MLs

- We find that there are 12 states which do not refer to English learners, MLs, or any other of the relevant terms in our search strategy within their literacy legislation.
- This number is notable as it encompasses over a quarter of the 45 states with literacy legislation.

No Mention

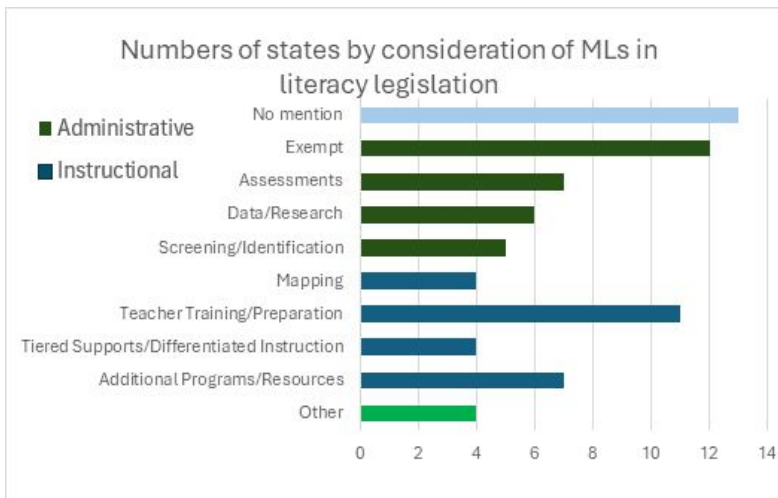
(Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Washington)

States



Findings of our State-by-State Comparison

- Mention – 33 states
- No Mention – 12 states



Mention

- **Administrative Considerations**
 - § Exemptions
 - § Assessment accommodations
 - § Data reporting
 - § Screening and identification practices
- **Instructional Considerations**
 - § Mapping literacy instruction to language development
 - § Teacher training
 - § Tiered supports and differentiated instruction
 - § Additional resources
- **Other Considerations**
 - § Program evaluation
 - § Qualifications of leadership
 - § Family communication

Federal Update – the READ Act

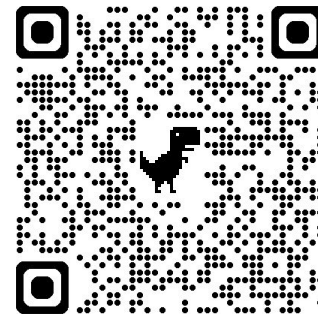
READING & LITERACY

Federal ‘Science of Reading’ Bill Advances



By [Sarah Schwartz](#) — July 31, 2026 ⌚ 5 min read

<https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/federal-science-of-reading-bill-advances/2026/07>



Extended Reading

- View the full CAL brief for this study
at: <http://bit.ly/4js0mg8>

- Scan the QR code:



Contact Us

Email: info@cal.org

Telephone: 202-362-0700

Twitter: [@CAL_Linguistics](https://twitter.com/CAL_Linguistics)

Instagram: [@LanguageApplied](https://www.instagram.com/LanguageApplied)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CALLinguistics

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/center-for-applied-linguistics/

YouTube: www.youtube.com/c/CenterforAppliedLinguistics

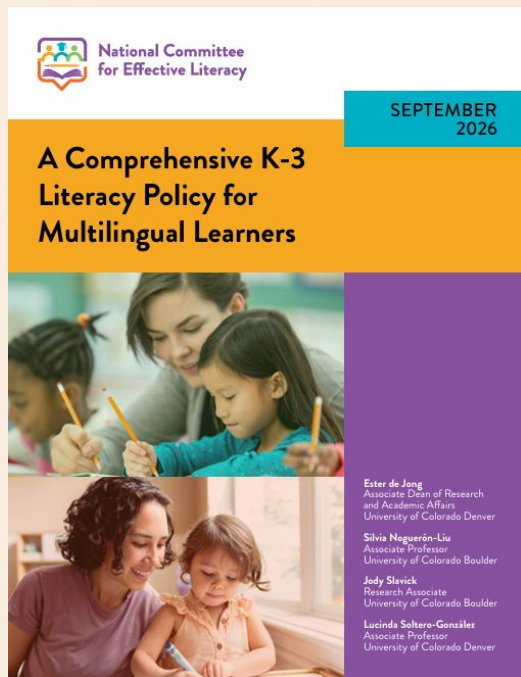
The National Committee for Effective Literacy uplifts research, policies, and practices to ensure that English learners/emergent bilinguals leave school as proficient readers and writers in English and preferably more languages and who thrive and succeed in school and their communities.



<https://multilingualliteracy.org>



A Comprehensive K-3 Literacy Policy for Multilingual Learners



Ester de Jong

Associate Dean of Research and Academic
Affairs, University of Colorado Denver

Silvia Noguérón-Liu

Associate Professor, University of Colorado
Boulder

Jody Slavick

Research Associate and Executive Director of
Literacy Squared, University of Colorado
Boulder

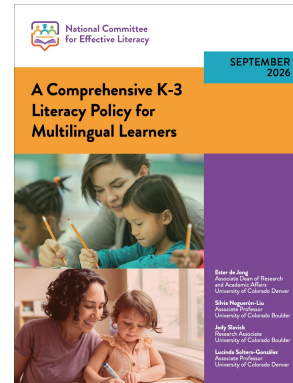
A Comprehensive K-3 Literacy Policy for Multilingual Learners

Ester de Jong, EdD

Silvia Nogueroń-Liu, PhD

Jody Slavick, PhD

Lucinda Soltero-González, PhD





Centering Multilingual Learners & Research: Guiding Principles

Whole Systems Approach

- *General education* instruction must reflect evidence-based practices for MLs
- The *system* of policies and practices needs to be addressed (state, district, school, program, classroom)

Diversity within MLs

Multilingual learners arrive at different times with varying competencies in English.

Many older multilingual learners come to initial literacy in English throughout K-12 with varying experiences in formal literacy in their home languages.

Asset-Based

Use affirmative language as to what do to

Reflect an asset-based perspective on students and what they bring to school

Base recommendations on research designed with and for multilingual learners



Comprehensive Literacy Policy for Multilingual Learners



Purpose

- To establish teaching practices and supports ... to ensure they make progress toward grade-level reading standards ***in accordance with students' levels of proficiency in English and their home languages and schooling experiences***
- For MLs in grades K-3 **and also for 4-12 grade students** new to country who are in the initial stages of literacy development in English as their additional language and who come with varying levels of educational and literacy experiences in their home language.

Components

- I. Systems
- II. Teacher Education
- III. Instructional Practices
- IV. Assessment and Caregiver
Communication
- V. Retention

Structure

- Principles
- Expanded evidence-based
explanation
- Policy questions

Educator Preparation

Summary of Fundamental Principles

Summary of Comprehensive Initial Literacy Policy: Fundamental Principles

I. SYSTEM CAPACITY

- Local, state and federal literacy funding explicitly supports evidence-based practices and instructional materials designed to serve MLs in grades K-3, as well as newly arrived students in grades 4-12, with diverse educational and home-language literacy experiences who are in the early stages of English literacy development.
- Ongoing, job-embedded teacher professional development focuses on evidence-based literacy practices for MLs, and is supported by literacy coaches with expertise in multilingual education.
- States establish licensure requirements that ensure teacher candidates demonstrate competency in literacy instruction, and assessment for MLs through multiple pathways.

II. EDUCATOR PREPARATION

- Educators have foundational knowledge of literacy learning and teaching in an additional language, second language acquisition, bilingualism and biliteracy, translanguaging, and culturally sustaining pedagogies that are grounded in the research on literacy instruction for MLs.
- Educators understand that literacy development for MLs is interdependent across foundational skills, meaning making and comprehension, effective expression (including writing and other multimodal systems), oral language development, and content knowledge.
- Teacher preparation programs ensure candidates participate in supervised field experiences necessary to teach and assess literacy for MLs.
- Educators are prepared to recognize the affordances and limitations of computer-based and AI-assisted assessments and instructional tools for MLs.

To be prepared to teach literacy to multilingual learners, educators need:

1. Specialized knowledge of multilingual literacy development
2. An integrated understanding of literacy
3. Supervised opportunities to connect knowledge to practice
4. An understanding of the affordances and limitations of digital and AI-assisted tools for MLs

Educator Preparation

A Closer Look at One Fundamental Principle

practices is needed. States must develop licensure requirements for teachers, administrators, and support personnel that reflect the necessary expertise related to multilingual learners and literacy development, and demonstrate expertise in literacy instruction and assessment for MLs through multiple pathways.

Questions

Does the allocation of federal, state, and local funds specifically target the language and literacy needs for multilingual learners, or is the funding generic for all students?

Do the elements of literacy defined in legislation or policy include foundational skills, effective expression, oral language development, second language development, meaning making, and content knowledge?

Does professional development for educators, coaches, and administrators differentiate and specify research and instructional practices for literacy development in a second language (English) and students' home language?

II. Educator Preparation

All educators working with MLs must have foundational knowledge of the research and practices that constitute a comprehensive, integrated approach to literacy development in an additional language and home language other than English. This includes research on second language acquisition, bilingualism and biliteracy development, translanguageing, and pedagogies that recognize and build on students' home languages and cultural identities. This knowledge is essential for effectively and equitably teaching literacy to this growing student population. It equips educators with an understanding of the unique aspects of literacy development in an additional language that extend beyond the monolingual orientation prevalent in current reading policy nationwide. This knowledge is also not distinguishing reading difficulties from the literacy development of multilinguals are developing proficiency across language.

Culturally sustaining pedagogical approaches are essential to effective and inclusive literacy for MLs. These approaches affirm and linguistic and cultural identities, levels and ways of knowing as assets for learning and support systematic across districts, district, and state levels, culturally sustain partnerships, and academic outcomes. Educators must understand how the foundational skills, meaning making and communication, oral language development, and literacy development are interconnected and how these elements across literacy and oral language development programs play a role in supporting multilingual learners' literacy development.



systems that support multilingual learners' literacy development. Teacher education programs must provide candidates with the supervised clinical experiences to teach and assess literacy for multilingual learners. Effective teacher education practices include coursework grounded in literacy research inclusive of MLs, and opportunities to design and facilitate literacy lessons and instructional units aligned to state academic standards and research-based frameworks for bilingual and dual language education. Clinical experiences should include placements in classrooms serving multilingual learners and, where applicable, in bilingual and dual language program settings. Programs must also develop candidates' ability to assess MLs' learning, use this information to guide instruction, and identify students who need additional literacy and language support. Candidates preparing to teach in bilingual and dual language programs must develop the specialized knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to support biliteracy development across program languages. Programs should also provide opportunities for candidates to learn a second language or strengthen their bilingual and biliteracy competencies.

Educators must be prepared to recognize the affordances and limitations of computer-based and AI-assisted assessments. Educators are able to examine how digital interfaces (e.g., dashboards, menus, automated scaffolds (e.g., audio recordings, pop-up windows with automated feedback), and the linguistic training of artificial intelligence systems) may shape student performance and introduce linguistic or cultural bias. Educators should be prepared to interpret data generated through digital tools alongside high-quality formative assessments that are designed and administered by educators.

Questions

Does teacher preparation programs equip candidates with the knowledge, research and skills a new teacher needs to understand how all elements of an English medium and bilingual classroom comprehensive literacy program are integrated, foundational skills, meaning making and comprehension, effective expression (speaking, writing, and other modes of communication), oral language development, and content knowledge?

Does teacher education include a course that incorporates research on second language acquisition, bilingualism and biliteracy development, translanguageing, and pedagogies that recognize and build on students' home languages and cultural identities?

Are candidates' placements for their clinical supervised experiences in English medium and bilingual classrooms, and mentored by those with English learner qualifications?

For bilingual education candidates who feel that their level of proficiency in the language other than English is insufficient, are there courses, language interactions or settings where they can develop the academic language they need for instruction?

1. Specialized knowledge of multilingual literacy development

What educators need to know and understand:

Second language acquisition

Bilingualism & biliteracy development

Translanguageing

Culturally affirming and sustaining pedagogical approaches

A question for teacher education programs:

Does the teacher education program include coursework that incorporates research on second language acquisition, bilingualism and biliteracy, translanguageing, and pedagogies that build on students' home languages and cultural identities?

Instruction and Supports

Summary of Fundamental Principles

To support comprehensive literacy instruction for multilingual learners, policy must ensure:

1. Language and literacy development are integrated across the instructional day in English-medium and bilingual/dual language programs.
2. Instructional materials are high quality and reflect evidence-based practices for MLs.
3. Additional literacy supports are linguistically and culturally sustaining, aligned with students' language development, and regularly monitored.

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III. INSTRUCTION AND SUPPORTS

- Instruction for MLs integrates language and literacy development across the instructional day and content areas in both English-medium and bilingual and dual language programs.
- High-quality instructional materials adopted by districts align to state standards, and reflect evidence-based literacy practices for MLs.
- Multilingual learners requiring additional literacy support receive linguistically and culturally sustaining instruction aligned to their language development across program languages, with ongoing progress monitoring.

IV. ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

- Early literacy screening and progress monitoring assessments are validated and calibrated for MLs, and include home language assessments to avoid misidentification of MLs for special education and/or reading difficulties.
- For MLs enrolled in bilingual and dual language programs, assessments (validated for MLs) consider language and literacy proficiency across program languages to provide a comprehensive picture of progress.
- Assessment results are interpreted relative to expected patterns of multilingual development and appropriate benchmarks.
- When screening for dyslexia characteristics occurs in kindergarten or first grade, this screening process relies on assessment tools validated for MLs, with attention to students' English proficiency and home language development.
- Early literacy assessments (validated for MLs) are administered regularly throughout the year, providing reliable and valid data for progress monitoring for K-3 students across all pillars of reading, oral language, and writing.

V. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- Parents and guardians receive timely, clear, and culturally and linguistically appropriate information about their child's progress, supports, and goals for literacy and, where applicable, biliteracy development.
- Ongoing family engagement is maintained through regular communication, conferences, and strategies that support literacy development at home in the language or languages families use most comfortably. Parents and guardians are considered equitable partners in all education decisionmaking for their children.
- Student and family data are collected, stored, and communicated in ways that protect privacy and confidentiality, and that comply with district, state, and federal requirements.

Instruction and Supports

A Closer Look at One Fundamental Principle

1. Language and literacy development are integrated across the instructional day in English-medium and bilingual/dual language programs.

III. Instruction (Including Supports within General Education)

Comprehensive literacy instruction for multilingual learners must integrate foundational skills, oral language development, meaning making, effective expression, and content knowledge rather than treating these components as isolated strands of instruction.

Comprehensive literacy instruction for multilingual learners integrates language and literacy development across the instructional day and content areas in both English-medium and dual language programs. Instruction is asset-based, and intentionally leverages students' background knowledge, lived experiences, interests, home languages, and cultural practices as resources for learning.

Oral language development, including vocabulary, is foundational to literacy and academic success. Multilingual learners must engage regularly in listening and speaking opportunities that are meaningfully connected to reading, writing, and content learning. Instruction explicitly addresses vocabulary, morphology, and language use to support comprehension, academic discourse, and knowledge building.

Foundational literacy instruction, including phonics and phonological awareness, must be explicit and systematic, and embedded in meaningful contexts that prioritize comprehension, oral language development, knowledge building and engagement. Instruction uses connected text, purposeful reading and writing, and rich oral language experiences to support decoding, comprehension, and language development. Instruction intentionally develops students' metalinguistic awareness, including attention to how language features compare and connect across languages, by drawing explicit attention to how language choices support meaning, purpose, and communication across reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

In bilingual and dual language programs, orthographic features of each language given to the similarities and differences.

Comprehensive literacy instruction for grade-level, content-rich, and culturally active engagement with text to build knowledge includes the explicit teaching of academic need to read, write, speak, and reason.

Instruction for MLs includes intentional to meaning and the development of top expectations. Differentiation and adds proficiency levels, prior literacy experts integrated and designated English language learners for multilingual learners. Integrated supporting language development in an explicit English language development.



on language development, and is not synonymous with foundational skills instruction or the use of foundational skills programs. Designated ELD must not reduce or reduce access to core literacy, content instruction, or multilingual and biliteracy opportunities. Together, integrated and designated ELD support coherent and sustained language development for multilingual learners.

Districts must adopt high-quality instructional materials aligned with state standards that are grounded in evidence-based literacy practices for multilingual learners. Materials should integrate language development, make cross-language relationships visible, and support biliteracy development in bilingual and dual language programs. From the outset, adoption processes must center the needs of MLs, include educators and other stakeholders with expertise in educating multilingual learners, and provide sustained professional learning to support effective implementation.

When multilingual learners require additional reading support, individualized plans and supports are developed collaboratively with families in the language the parent or caregiver understands best. Supports and interventions must be linguistically and culturally sustaining and aligned with MLs' literacy skills and language development across the languages of instruction, including both program languages in bilingual and dual language programs, and monitored regularly. Progress monitoring data inform instructional adjustments, and are analyzed through a multilingual and multicultural lens.

Extended learning opportunities, including summer and enrichment programs, provide additional instructional time for multilingual learners. Summer literacy programs for MLs integrate language and literacy development, build on students' linguistic and cultural assets, and maintain coherence with school-year program models, including bilingual and dual language programs. Extended-time interventions for MLs should deliver targeted, linguistically and culturally sustaining instruction designed to accelerate students' progress toward grade-level literacy expectations and, in bilingual contexts, biliteracy goals.

Questions and Considerations

In state and district instructional guides and curriculum, is there equal treatment and support for high-quality instruction for second language development including designated and integrated ELD and first language literacy equal to scope of mainstream English language instruction?

Does state policy address foundational literacy embedded in meaningful contexts that prioritize comprehension and engagement?

Does instruction incorporate connected text, purposeful reading and writing, and rich oral language experiences?

Do district or state instructional materials adoption include high-quality instructional materials integrating language development and visible cross-language relationships? Does adoption support biliteracy development in bilingual and dual language programs?

Does policy and legislation promote linguistically and culturally sustaining instruction and bilingual education options that accelerate students' progress toward grade-level literacy expectations in both English-medium and bilingual contexts?

What policy must support:

- Intentional use of students' home languages, experiences, and cultural knowledge
- Explicit, systematic foundational skills instruction embedded in meaningful contexts that prioritize comprehension, oral language, knowledge building, and engagement.
- Foundational biliteracy instruction aligned with each language's orthographic features, with purposeful cross-language connections.
- Integrated and designated ELD that supports—not replaces—core literacy and content instruction

A question for states and districts:

Do state and district instructional guides provide equitable attention and support for second-language development—including integrated and designated ELD—and home-language literacy?

Assessment Practices

Summary of Fundamental Principles

III. INSTRUCTION AND SUPPORTS

- Instruction for MLs integrates language and literacy development across the instructional day and content areas in both English-medium and bilingual and dual language programs.
- High-quality instructional materials adopted by districts align to state standards, and reflect evidence-based literacy practices for MLs.
- Multilingual learners requiring additional literacy support receive linguistically and culturally sustaining instruction aligned to their language development across program languages, with ongoing progress monitoring.

IV. ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

- Early literacy screening and progress monitoring assessments are validated and calibrated for MLs, and include home language assessments to avoid misidentification of MLs for special education and/or reading difficulties.
- For MLs enrolled in bilingual and dual language programs, assessments (validated for MLs) consider language and literacy proficiency across program languages to provide a comprehensive picture of progress.
- Assessment results are interpreted relative to expected patterns of multilingual development and appropriate benchmarks.
- When screening for dyslexia characteristics occurs in kindergarten or first grade, this screening process relies on assessment tools validated for MLs, with attention to students' English proficiency and home language development.
- Early literacy assessments (validated for MLs) are administered regularly throughout the year, providing reliable and valid data for progress monitoring for K-3 students across all pillars of reading, oral language, and writing.

V. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- Parents and guardians receive timely, clear, and culturally and linguistically appropriate information about their child's progress, supports, and goals for literacy and, where applicable, biliteracy development.
- Ongoing family engagement is maintained through regular communication, conferences, and strategies that support literacy development at home in the language or languages families use most comfortably. Parents and guardians are considered equitable partners in all education decisionmaking for their children.
- Student and family data are collected, stored, and communicated in ways that protect privacy and confidentiality, and that comply with district, state, and federal requirements.

Screening and progress monitoring assessments are validated and calibrated for multilingual learners.

For students in bilingual/dual language programs, assessments consider language and literacy proficiency across program languages

Results are interpreted relative to expected patterns of multilingual development and benchmarks.

Screening in K-1 grades relies on tools validated for MLs

Assessments are administered regularly for progress monitoring, across all pillars of reading, including oral language and writing.

Assessment Practices

A Closer Look at One Fundamental Principle

Results are interpreted relative to expected patterns of multilingual development and appropriate benchmarks.

IV. Assessment and Parent Communication

Early literacy assessment serves two purposes: documenting what students know and can do over time, and identifying students who may need additional supports. Screening and progress monitoring assessments must be validated and calibrated for multilingual learners, and include home language assessment when appropriate based on students' instructional experiences and language backgrounds to ensure students are not misidentified as having reading difficulties. In bilingual and dual language programs, assessment must consider literacy development across both languages to provide a comprehensive picture of a student's full linguistic repertoire.

Interpreting a range of reading assessment data is essential for guiding instructional adjustment and identifying students who may need additional literacy support, while ensuring quality teaching in core instruction. For all MLs, a body of evidence should be used and interpreted relative to expected patterns of multilingual development and appropriate benchmarks. For multilingual learners in bilingual and dual language programs, this includes examining the body of evidence across the program languages. This body of evidence can enable educators to make holistic interpretations of a wide range of assessment data across languages and modalities (e.g., visual, audio, kinesthetic) a student may rely on when they learn and communicate. These interpretations can inform more equitable instructional decisions. It is critical for distinguishing between language development needs and reading difficulties, and for preventing misidentification of MLs for reading interventions or special education referrals.

If screening for dyslexia characteristics in kindergarten or first grade, the screener must include tools that are validated for multilingual learners. To ensure valid results, English language screening should occur only when students have sufficient English proficiency, and home language measures should be included. A comprehensive dyslexia evaluation must be performed by a licensed professional with expertise in dyslexia and multilingual learners. Any screening that occurs during the preschool years or at the beginning of kindergarten must be conducted with developmentally appropriate assessments, validated for MLs and administered in the home language(s), when appropriate, by staff with bilingual expertise. Additional information and a body of evidence collected in collaboration with caregivers must also be considered during the screening process with young multilingual learners.

Families are essential partners in their children's literacy development. When a reading difficulty is identified, parents or caregivers must be notified in a timely manner, in the language they understand best, and engaged as partners in developing and implementing plans to support their child. Families should receive clear information about their child's progress, the supports available, and how they can support their child's literacy development.

Original family engagement includes a communication progress report, oral and written communication, and cultural and linguistic support. Family engagement includes a communication progress report, oral and written communication, and cultural and linguistic support. Family engagement includes a communication progress report, oral and written communication, and cultural and linguistic support. Family engagement includes a communication progress report, oral and written communication, and cultural and linguistic support.

Education records and student data are stored, and communicated in ways that protect confidentiality and comply with state and federal requirements. The safety of student records must be ensured in the digital technology, digital platforms, and any other systems used to store and communicate student data.

Questions

Screening and assessment are an element in state and district mandates, is there a clear definition as to when the screening should be administered, and for what purpose? Is it clear which screeners and assessments are appropriate to determine potential reading difficulties, including dyslexia, as opposed to progress monitoring and assessing multilingual learners' knowledge and abilities?

Are screening and assessment tools available in multiple languages? Have tools, whether they are in English or other languages, been standardized to meet the needs of the state's multilingual population?

Do the assessments adjust or differentiate for students at different English language proficiency levels? Do the assessment publishers indicate the level of English proficiency needed for valid and reliable results when administered to multilingual learners?

Are multilingual learners assessed in both English and their home language, when appropriate? Are the results from both screeners used to develop a complete profile of student strengths and areas of improvement?

Do parents and caregivers understand the purpose and significance of the results from the assessments? Are they informed about the role they can play in supporting their child's language and literacy development?

V. Retention

The issue of retention for multilingual learners is complex, and decisions must be based on multiple measures, including students' language proficiency, literacy development across languages, prior education experiences, quality of instruction, as well as the length of time a student has been in the United States. In bilingual and dual language programs, students' literacy development follows trajectories that differ from monolingual literacy pathways, and must be considered in retention decisions, particularly when grade-level expectations are based on monolingual benchmarks.

Learning another language is a developmental process that takes time. While this process can be accelerated with effective instruction, students' abilities to access grade-level content in a language other than their home language requires sustained opportunities for learning. Third grade retention does not necessarily lead to academic benefits for MLs when the primary factor is language development. The limited research on retention for multilingual learners shows that any benefits of retention fade over time. Moreover, studies consistently document that short-term gains in reading scores are often the result of intensified and extended language and literacy supports provided while students are retained. Retention decisions must be made with careful consideration, and should not be used as a primary response to language development needs.

To ensure valid results, English language screening should occur only when students have sufficient English proficiency, and home language measures should be included.

A comprehensive dyslexia evaluation must be performed by a licensed professional with expertise in dyslexia and multilingual learners.

Any screening that occurs during the preschool years or at the beginning of kindergarten must be conducted with developmentally appropriate assessments, validated for MLs, and administered in the home language(s), when appropriate, by staff with bilingual expertise.

Additional information and a body of evidence collected in collaboration with caregivers must also be considered during the screening process with young multilingual learners.

A question for states and districts: Do the assessment publishers indicate the level of proficiency needed for valid and reliable results, when administered to multilingual learners?

Family Engagement

Summary of Fundamental Principles

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Parents and guardians receive timely, clear, and appropriate information about child's progress.

Ongoing communication and equitable partnerships are maintained.

Data are collected, store, and communicated in ways that protect confidentiality and comply with privacy requirements.

Family Engagement

A Closer Look at One Fundamental Principle

IV. Assessment and Parent Communication

Early literacy assessment serves two purposes: documenting what students know and can do over time, and identifying students who may need additional supports. Screening and progress monitoring assessments must be validated and calibrated for multilingual learners, and include home language assessment when appropriate based on students' instructional experiences and language backgrounds to ensure students are not misidentified as having reading difficulties. In bilingual and dual language programs, assessment must consider literacy development across both languages to provide a comprehensive picture of a student's full linguistic repertoire.

Interpreting a range of reading assessment data is essential for guiding instructional adjustment and identifying students who may need additional literacy support, while ensuring quality teaching in core instruction. For all MLs, a body of evidence should be used and interpreted relative to expected patterns of multilingual development and appropriate benchmarks. For multilingual learners in bilingual and dual language programs, this includes examining the body of evidence across the program languages. This body of evidence can enable educators to make holistic interpretations of a wide range of assessment data across languages and modalities (e.g., visual, audio, kinesthetic) a student may rely on when they learn and communicate. These interpretations can inform more equitable instructional decisions. It is critical for distinguishing between language development needs and reading difficulties, and for preventing misidentification of MLs for reading interventions or special education referrals.

If screening for dyslexia characteristics in kindergarten or first grade, the screening must include tools that are validated for multilingual learners. To ensure valid results, English language screening should occur only when students have sufficient English proficiency, and home language measures should be included. A comprehensive dyslexia evaluation must be performed by a licensed professional with expertise in dyslexia and multilingual learners. Any screening that occurs during the preschool years or at the beginning of kindergarten must be conducted with developmentally appropriate assessments, validated for MLs, and administered in the home language(s), when appropriate, by staff with bilingual expertise. Additional information and a body of evidence collected in collaboration with caregivers must also be considered during the screening process with young multilingual learners.

Families are essential partners in their children's literacy development. When a reading difficulty is identified, parents or caregivers must be notified in a timely manner, in the language they understand best, and engaged as partners in developing and implementing plans to support their child. Families should receive clear information about their child's progress, the supports available, and the steps to take.

Ongoing family engagement includes communication, progress reports, and cultural and linguistically sustaining literacy at home. Family engagement in reading, storytelling, and oral language or languages they use to recognize that literacy practices are a support for development across languages.

Education records and student data are stored, and communicated in ways that are confidentially, and comply with state and federal requirements. The safety of records must be ensured in the digital technology, digital platforms, and any other systems used to store and communicate data.

Questions

Are screening and assessments an element in state and district mandates, is there a clear definition as to when the screening should be administered, and for what purposes? Is it clear which screenings and assessments are appropriate to determine potential reading difficulties, including dyslexia, as opposed to progress monitoring and assessing multilingual learners' knowledge and abilities?

Are screening and assessment tools available in multiple languages? Have tools, whether they are in English or other languages, been standardized to meet the needs of the state's multilingual population?

Do the assessments adjust or differentiate for students at different English language proficiency levels? Do the assessment publishers indicate the level of English proficiency needed for valid and reliable results when administered to multilingual learners?

Are multilingual learners assessed in both English and their home language, when appropriate? Are the results from both screenings used to develop a complete profile of student strengths and areas of improvement?

Do parents and caregivers understand the purpose and significance of the results from the assessments? Are they informed about the role they can play in supporting their child's language and literacy development?

V. Retention

The issue of retention for multilingual learners is complex, and decisions must be based on multiple measures, including students' language proficiency, literacy development across languages, prior education experiences, quality of instruction, as well as the length of time a student has been in the United States. In bilingual and dual language programs, students' literacy development follows trajectories that differ from monolingual literacy pathways, and must be considered in retention decisions, particularly when grade-level expectations are based on monolingual benchmarks.

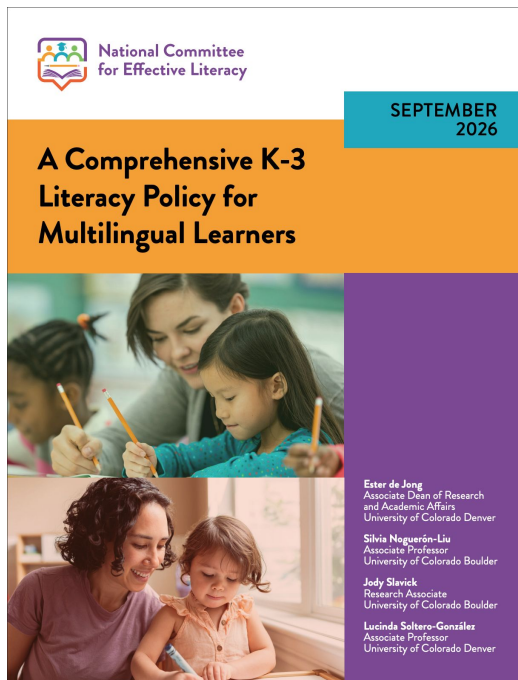
Learning another language is a developmental process that takes time. While this process can be accelerated with effective instruction, students' abilities to access grade-level content in a language other than their home language requires sustained opportunities for learning. Third-grade retention does not necessarily lead to academic benefits for MLs when the primary factor is language development. The limited research on retention for multilingual learners shows that any benefits of retention fade over time. Moreover, studies consistently document that short-term gains in reading scores are often the result of intensified and extended language and literacy supports provided while students are retained. Retention decisions must be made with careful consideration, and should not be used as a primary response to language development needs.

Ongoing communication and equitable partnerships are maintained.

Engagement includes regular communication, progress reports, conferences, and culturally and linguistically sustaining strategies to support literacy at home

Question for state and districts: Do parents and caregivers understand the purpose and significance of the results from the multiple assessments and how they can play a role in the language and literacy development of their child?

THANK YOU



Panel Discussion

Diana Mendoza

Associate Superintendent of Student & Family Engagement at Dodge City Public Schools – USD 443

Erika Méndez

Director of Early Childhood and K–12 Education Policy and Advocacy at the Latino Policy Forum

Magaly Lavadenz (Moderator)

CAL Board of Trustees, Professor and founding Executive Director of the Center for Equity for English Learners in the School of Education at Loyola Marymount University



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