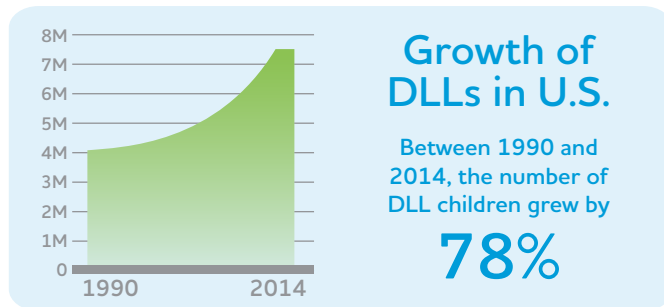


# WHO ARE DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS?



Dual Language Learners (DLL) are children, birth to age 5, who are learning two (or more) languages at the same time, or are learning a second language while continuing to develop their first (or home) language (U. S. Office of Head Start).

This term differs from English Learner (EL), which is the term used in K–12 education to define the population of students who have a home language other than English, and are learning English as a second language.



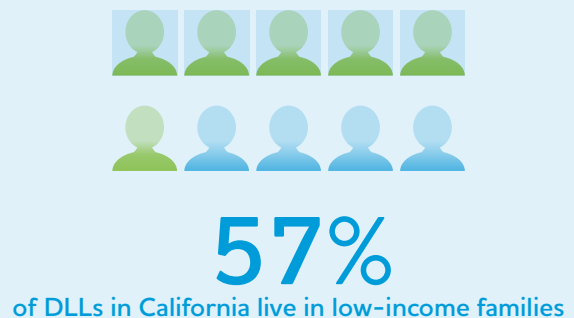
## Why should we focus on dual-language learners?

- DLLs represent a large and growing portion of the child population in the United States representing 32 percent of all children under age 5<sup>1</sup>.
- California leads the country in the size of its DLL population with 1,785,000 DLL children.



- Looking at the share of children in each state who are DLLs, California again ranks first, with DLLs representing 59 percent of children under the age of five in the state.
- Across the United States, DLLs are less likely than their peers to enroll in high-quality early childhood programs, even though they stand to benefit disproportionately from such services.
- Fifty seven percent of DLLs in California live in low-income families (i.e., families with income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level), as compared with 36 percent of non-DLLs.
- In California, 29 percent of parents of DLL children have less than a high school education, compared with 5 percent of parents of non-DLLs, indicating significant risk factors for this population<sup>2</sup>.

## DLLs more likely to live in low-income families



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## DLLs Facts

- On average, children who are DLLs enter kindergarten behind their peers, particularly in the areas of language, literacy, and math.<sup>3</sup>
- Academic success beyond the third grade is highly dependent on the development of foundational language skills, during the early years.
- There is a lack of proven evidence-based models and instructional practices that effectively support the learning and development of children who are DLLs.<sup>4</sup>
- Other than parents, teachers have the most significant and long-lasting impact on a child's educational trajectory<sup>5</sup>. Teacher preparation and ongoing professional development with an explicit emphasis on serving DLLs/ELs is crucial to promoting these children's academic success.<sup>6</sup>

## Examples of Promising Professional Development Programs

Several promising professional development approaches have shown positive effects on child outcomes and have been cited as exemplary.<sup>ibid</sup>

- eCircle Online Professional Development Approach (modified version):
  - A national in-service online professional development training that includes a module on culture, language, and instruction, with short video examples on such issues as language development and family engagement.
- Nuestros Niños School Readiness Program:
  - A national program specifically developed for teachers who work with Spanish-speaking preschool children.
- Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) program:
  - A California-based PreK through 3rd grade program that develops language and literacy, and prioritizes practices that help prevent the creation of long-term ELs.



## Policy Recommendations

The growing number of dual language learners and the lack of training for the workforce that serves them, call for immediate attention to workforce development.

- Develop quality, low-cost professional development options for early learning professionals related to working with DLLs and their families.
- Expand, capacity of existing research-based and quality professional development training that show positive outcomes for dual language learners.

By investing in workforce development for educators of dual language learners, we can work towards closing the achievement gap for these children.

<sup>1</sup> Pompa, Delia, Maki Park, and Michale Fix. 2017. New Opportunities? ESSA and its implications for Dual Language Learners and ECEC Workforce Development. Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute.

<sup>2</sup> Park, Maki, Anna O'Toole, and Caitlin Katsiaficas. 2017. *Dual Language Learners: A Demographic and Policy Profile for California (2012-14)*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. *Policy Statement on Supporting The Development of Children Who are Dual Language Learners in Early Childhood Programs* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, 2016). [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/dll\\_policy\\_statement\\_final.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/dll_policy_statement_final.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Boyd, D. J., Grossman, P. L., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2009). Teacher preparation and student achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 31(4), 416-440. Go to - <http://journals.sagepub.com/doiabs/10.3102/0162373709353129>

<sup>6</sup> Zepeda, M. (November 2017). *California's Gold: An Advocacy Framework for Young Dual Language Learners*. Retrieved from Go to - <https://dllframework.org/>