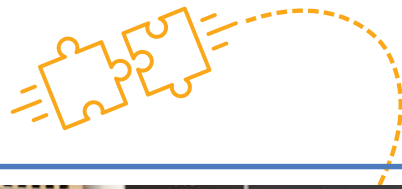


# COVID-19 RAPID RESPONSE: URGENT NEEDS OF DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNER CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



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# ABOUT US



Years Fighting for Equity

## ADVANCEMENT PROJECT CALIFORNIA

Advancement Project California is a next-generation, multiracial civil rights organization working on systems change. California staff in Los Angeles and Sacramento work to expand opportunities in our educational systems, create healthy built environments, build participatory and representative communities, and shift public investments toward equity. We develop rigorous, evidence-based solutions, innovate technology and tools with coalition partners to advance the field, broker partnerships between community advocates and the halls of power, and build racial and economic equity. With the understanding that education is an essential component in improving the lives and opportunities of all Californians, we work across the state and with a diverse set of stakeholders to improve the early learning and K-12 education systems. We believe that effective and respectful partnerships are the bedrock of fixing a system responsible for educating California's children.



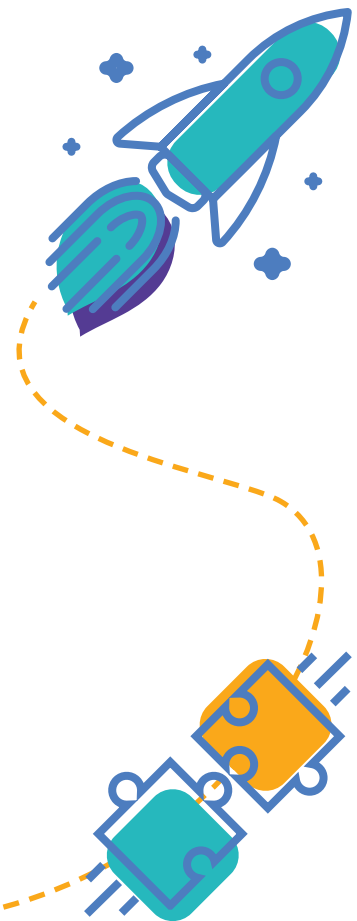
## EARLY EDGE CALIFORNIA

Early Edge California focuses on advancing policy changes to expand high-quality Early Learning programs for all children from birth to age 8. We believe all California children should have access to high-quality learning experiences, so they can have a strong foundation for future success. Our statewide efforts are centered on increasing the availability of quality programs for infants through age 8, as well as increasing compensation and training for Early Learning teachers and specialized support for dual language learners. We work to inform lawmakers, leaders, and others about the need for investment in quality Early Learning programs; build coalitions to recommend statewide funding levels and inspire policy change; and, promote quality programs that are working, to increase their availability and strengthen understanding of what quality learning means at every stage. We are proud to serve as a voice for the needs of families and Early Learning teachers.



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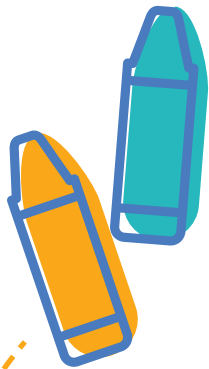
# INTRODUCTION



**California is home to the nation's largest population of Dual Language Learners (DLLs)<sup>1</sup>: 60% of children under age 6 are from homes in which non-English languages are spoken.<sup>2</sup> A child's home language and culture are central to their healthy growth and development. Going forward this truism must be reflected in our policies and practices. As COVID-19 complicates and exacerbates existing inequities to children's full access and participation in high-quality early learning and care (ELC), support for DLL families' cultural and linguistic strengths should not be viewed as optional. Rather, such opportunities will determine whether the majority of California's young children equitably receive high-quality education and are set on the path to success.**

In February 2020, Advancement Project California and Early Edge California released the Dual Language Learner (DLL) Policy Platform, which presents a set of policy recommendations to support a greater focus on DLL children in California's ELC system. This was written at a time of great optimism for the ELC field due to the Governor's commitment of a \$2.3 billion investment in 2019-2020 to support and expand ELC opportunities centered on equity. Pivotal to the Governor's commitment was the development of a Master Plan for ELC to streamline and align regulations and policies to facilitate access to quality ELC for every child and family, and, importantly, support for early educators<sup>3</sup> providing care.

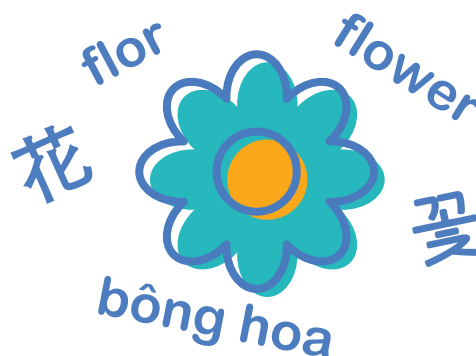
- 1 Dual language learners are children birth to age five learning two or more languages simultaneously or learning a second language while developing their home language. Although Spanish is the most commonly occurring first language, there are over 59 other languages spoken in California including indigenous languages such as Mixteco, Triqui, and Zapoteco.
- 2 S. Holtby et al., Families with Young Children in California: Findings from the California Health Interview Survey, 2011-2014, by Geography and Home Language, (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2017), [http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publications/Documents/PDF/2017/Child\\_PB\\_FI-NAL\\_5-31-17.pdf](http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publications/Documents/PDF/2017/Child_PB_FI-NAL_5-31-17.pdf).
- 3 Early educators refers to teachers and administrators of any ELC setting serving children birth through age five.



Since that time, the profound financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the state to rethink what it can do to sustain current access and support quality in ELC settings. California now faces a \$54.3 billion budget deficit for 2020 and 2021, which will have detrimental impacts on the programs that comprise the health and safety networks for tens of thousands of parents, children, and early educators.

As we move forward and work to recover and strengthen our ELC system, we must build on the promise of a multilingual and multicultural California that voters overwhelmingly supported in 2016 through Proposition 58 (California Education for a Global Economy Initiative) that facilitated the development of the California English Learner Roadmap state policy. To make this a reality, we must also vigorously advocate for the support and capacity building of early educators who serve DLL children and can create culturally and linguistically responsive learning environments that are critical to high-quality ELC. These educators are often women of color who earn substandard wages and work tirelessly caring for children in order for families to maintain employment. In the coming months, these essential workers will shoulder a significant cost in the re-starting of our economy as families seek out ELC to allow a return to work.

Quality ELC for DLLs intentionally builds on the language and cultural assets of the child and family and addresses their unique needs as they learn and grow in multiple languages. It is clear that without ensuring access to care designed for DLL children and families, the state is not meeting the basic needs of all children. The fact remains that the majority of our youngest are DLLs, many of whom come from low-income and immigrant families least able to weather the hardships associated with income and learning loss arising as a result of COVID-19. This crisis presents a pivotal moment to protect and strengthen the elements of an equitable ELC system that builds on California's rich multicultural and multilingual diversity.



# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

**As the entire cradle-to-career education system is now under extreme duress, the momentum of policy gains from the California English Learner Roadmap and Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education may lose salience. The following set of policy recommendations describe urgent actions and relevant long-term measures that need to be taken to ensure fair and equitable treatment of DLLs and their families and the dedicated early educators who work to support them.**

## A. RESPONDING TO IMMEDIATE NEEDS

**1. Provide Immediate Financial Support for Home-based and Center-based early educators who are adapting to the rapidly changing health and safety guidelines in light of COVID-19.** Guarantee full payment when Public Health or other official guidelines restrict the number of children in their care. Provide supplemental (hazard pay) compensation that is prorated for the original enrollment licensing capacity so that educators can continue in-person services during COVID-19. Provide guaranteed payment if the center/home is required to close for COVID-19 positive cases for a period of time by Public Health or Community Care Licensing.

**HOME-BASED: Increase licensed home-based settings through targeted funding to trusted messengers such as Childcare Resource and Referral (R&R) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that are the backbone of sustaining the ELC field.** A significant number of the youngest and most vulnerable populations of DLL children are served in home-based settings (Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) and Family Child Care Homes (FCCH)). Childcare R&R and CBOs are important conduits for services such as emergency relief, capacity-building, and resources in implementing public health guidelines (supply of sanitizing and disinfecting materials). Acknowledging implementation challenges due to geographical location (e.g. urban/rural), digital connectivity, and the availability of early learning personnel, regional hubs can play an important role in serving home-based early educators.

- Due to the need for sustaining and expanding home-based settings, augmented funding is needed to provide professional development and resources for FFNs and FCCHs serving DLL children. Funding to assist license-exempt providers to acquire a license is critical during this time. Based on Local Planning Council data, funding priority should be given to child care deserts in the allocation of funds.
- Fund embedded family navigators within FCC networks serving DLL families to link with Family Resource Centers and Early Childhood Mental Health providers for concrete support for both families and FCC's operators. This could address the food insecurity, trauma, housing, etc., experienced during COVID-19 and beyond. FCC networks can also promote the use of shared services to assist with business activities such as enrollment and billing.



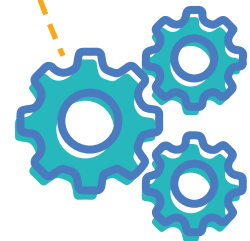


- Expand funding for the Childcare Initiative Project (CCIP)<sup>4</sup> to build capacity in serving DLLs, such as disseminating best practices within their networks.
- Include information about the development of first and second language acquisition and strategies to work with DLL children and families in required training for or following licensing that is tied to compensation and career pathways.

**CENTER-BASED: Provide financial supports such as incentives and stipends to sustain the viability of center-based care.** Due to COVID-19 guidelines, centers must reduce teacher-child ratios, rearrange their environments, and increase the supply of sanitizing and disinfecting materials. Many center-based programs serve DLLs and their families. Smaller group sizes impact centers' fiscal business models, making operations unsustainable. Without financial or regulatory relief, many centers will not be able to reopen.

- Regulations should continue to include a holding harmless clause on attendance to ensure centers can earn their contract and not be penalized for smaller ratios.
- Provide supplemental compensation to those implementing hybrid learning models that require additional working hours beyond the expected standard.

<sup>4</sup> The Child Care Initiative Project (CCIP) is a statewide initiative to build the supply and improve the quality of licensed family child care homes in California. The CCIP works through local Childcare Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies to recruit, train, and retain licensed family child care providers.



**2. Provide funding and regulatory flexibility during distance learning to equip early educators, coaches, and families with culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate tools and training to teach DLLs.**

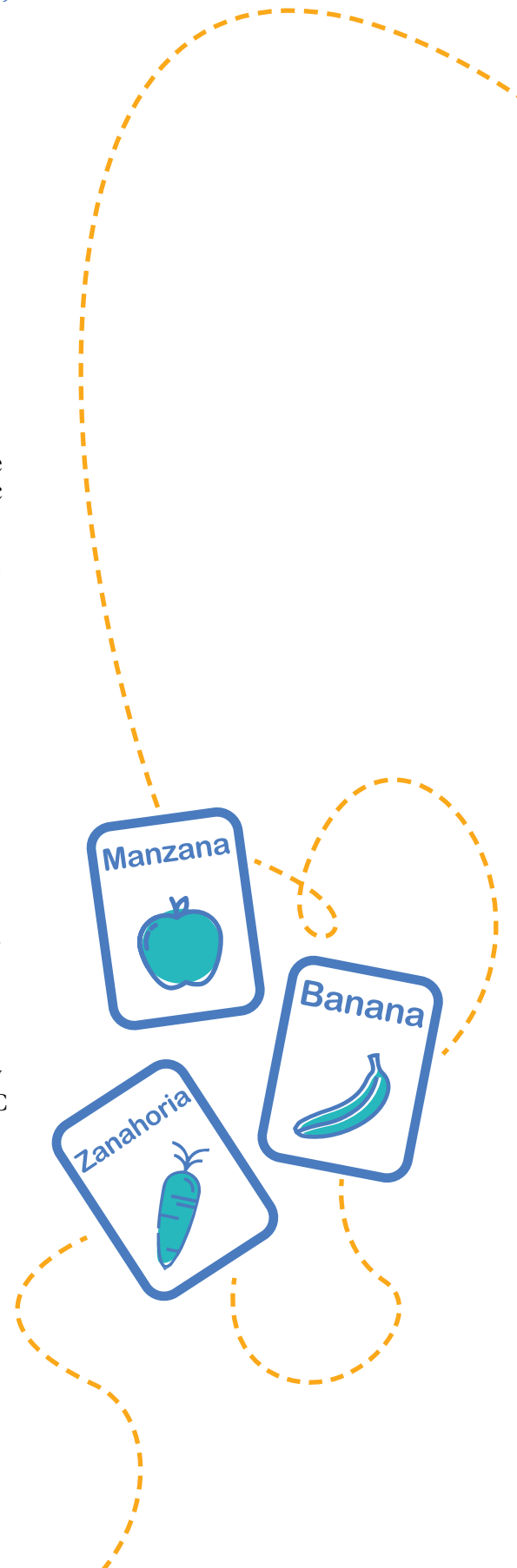
**Funding should also include alternative sites such as home visitation, library services, and neighborhood resources centers as the appropriate conduits to reach families.** During this time when children are home with their families, there is an opportunity to build stronger family partnerships and encourage home language-based activities. Materials and strategies should build on best practices for DLLs found in the Language Learning Project, Personalized Oral Language Learning strategies, San Mateo County Office of Education’s Family Engagement Approach, Sobrato Early Academic Language, Abriendo Puertas, among others. The California Department of Education (CDE) and the Department of Social Services (DSS) should provide coordinated supports on:

- Equitable access to digital devices and internet connectivity for DLL families and early educators to engage in distance or hybrid learning. Training on the use of digital platforms to support the continued care and learning of DLLs.
- Training of both home-based and center-based educators on how to connect, communicate, and engage with families who are non-English speakers. Include information and tools for families on how to best support their child’s linguistic and overall development, including the benefits of bilingualism and how to foster their child’s home language.
- Age- and developmentally-appropriate digital materials and resources for early educators to support DLLs through distance learning. Identify and maintain a clearinghouse to host and disseminate curated materials and supports for DLLs in multiple languages (e.g. Kidango at Home - Learn at Home Kits). This could be done through existing platforms such as the Early Learning and Care Playbook and English Learner Roadmap Resource Hub. Dissemination of information and materials could be done through Local Educational Agencies, Head Start Grantees, libraries, CBOs, and Local Planning Councils.
- Learning networks across the state for early educators to share promising practices on distance learning with DLLs.

**3. In any COVID-19 funding, the CDE and DSS should provide clear guidance for every ELC program about the importance of socioemotional support for DLL children and mental health support for DLL families and early educators.**

For young children, it is their primary caregivers who, through their home language, help them understand the world around them and provide safety and security. During this time of crisis, caregivers must not only protect and nurture children but also manage their own emotions and reactions to the pandemic. For DLLs, the socioemotional environment is particularly critical as they often face both cultural and linguistic discontinuity as they move from home to ELC settings. The following actions are needed:

- Integrate the framework of trauma-informed care and healing-centered engagement (e.g. support regulation, prioritize relationships) into support for families.
- Include information, in any COVID-19 guidance documents and resources, on the importance of supporting the development of the home language and its relationship to healthy self-identity, and the advantages of bilingualism in the early years and beyond. Ensure that this information is also shared with families in their home languages.
- Allot compensated time to early educators for reflective supervision, the discussion of coping strategies (e.g. breathing exercises, physical activity), and different ways of building communities of support.







## B. STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS

### 1. Ensure that the needs of DLL children and their families are addressed in any ELC policy efforts, starting with the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care and the implementation of the Preschool Development Grant.

Meaningful family engagement and input should be systematically sought and attended to. This includes guaranteeing recommendations are vetted by families of DLLs throughout the process. Data shows the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color, particularly Black, Latinx, Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander, and low-income populations - many of whom are DLL families. Utilizing the asset-based framework found in the California English Learner Roadmap, policy and decision-makers must listen to and incorporate the voices of families, early educators, and community partners to understand how best to address their needs. These stakeholders are important bridges and sources of continuity for children during these unpredictable times.

### 2. Prioritize resources for quality “improvement” in Quality Counts funding for embedding DLL content in their Professional Development strategy framework, alongside concrete support for coaches and mentors on best practices for working with DLLs and their families.

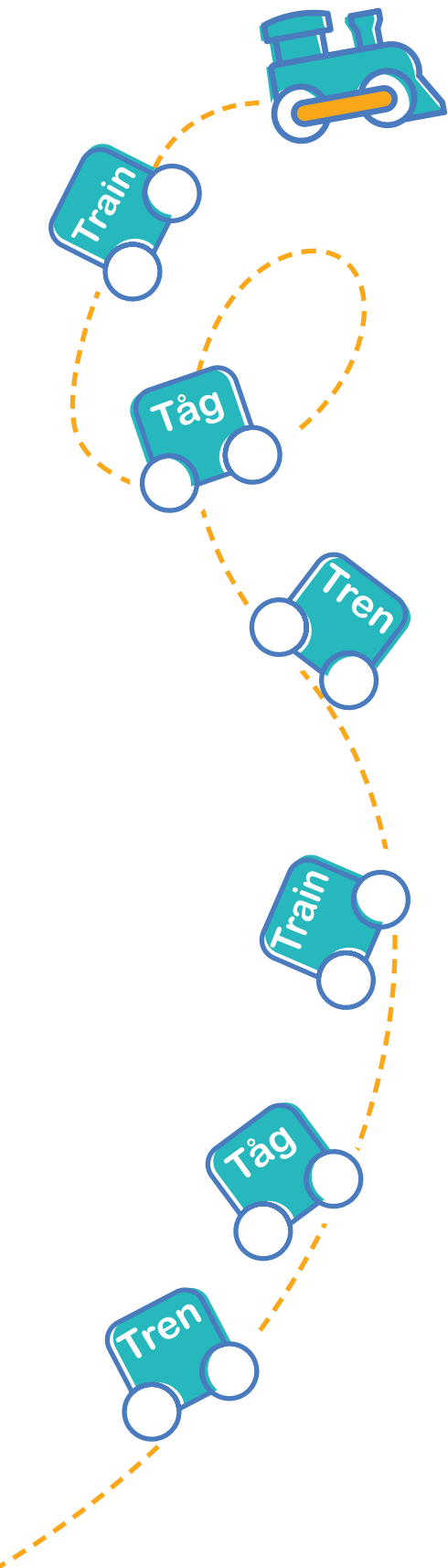
- Resources for professional development for coaches and mentors must include best practices for DLLs and their families across the mixed-delivery system and age ranges. Best practices must address the needs of children who are both DLLs and children with disabilities. Evidence-based coaching and mentoring are essential to support all early educators to provide high-quality ELC that meets the needs of DLLs.
- In the immediate term, in light of COVID-19 and with an anticipated loss of workforce capacity, we will need emergency ‘onboarding’ of individuals with little or no experience or training working with young children. Coaches and mentors can provide support during the initial phase of caring for and educating young children, while the processes and procedures to onboarding provide a stepping stone in career mobility.
- To effectively facilitate such support, we must also ensure that long-term systemic revisions in the Quality Counts criteria address the needs of DLLs and their families. It is recognized that the assessment tools used to measure quality are inappropriate for DLLs and alternatives need to be addressed by a DLL expert workgroup on assessment.



**3. Strengthen workforce capacity for serving DLLs and their families in the required pre-service foundational coursework and professional development initiatives.**

It is essential that both pre-service and in-service early educator preparation programs integrate advances in neuroscience about bilingualism and elevate pedagogical approaches and strategies appropriate for DLLs' full participation in the curriculum.

- **Require content on DLLs in the Child Development Permit so that all educators are prepared to support DLLs and their families.** Coursework for the Child Development Permit is directed by the Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP) to support curriculum consistency across community colleges, California State Universities, and private universities. Currently, the CAP Project is revising its course criteria in relation to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC)'s Early Childhood Educator Teacher Performance Expectations (ECE-TPEs). We must work with both the Child Development Training Consortium and CTC to ensure that the revised CAP 8 coursework explicitly describes competencies that prepare educators to appropriately serve DLLs and their families. In addition, DLL experts and stakeholders should be involved in the Teacher Performance Assessment being developed as part of the Preschool Development Grant Renewal to ensure it has a strong focus on DLLs.
- **Develop a bilingual authorization and/or specialization that focuses on serving DLLs and their families.** DLL-specific coursework and training are needed to deepen and strengthen an individual's knowledge and ability to implement effective dual-language practices. This would prepare early educators with the necessary linguistic proficiency and pedagogical skills to teach in a dual-language ELC setting. This includes knowing best practices in teaching in the target language that is not a translation or transfer of practices used for language and literacy teaching in English. This would be accompanied by increased compensation to acknowledge their specialized skill set and training.
- **Build higher education faculty capacity to provide DLL-specific content to aspiring early educators, from serving infant/toddler programs to Transitional Kindergarten.** Provide DLL-specific professional development to existing teacher educators that emphasizes first and second language development, the advantages of bilingualism, effective pedagogical practices, anti-bias teaching, and strategies for developing reciprocal engagement and partnerships with culturally and linguistically diverse families.
- **Create apprenticeship models that provide aspiring early educators with meaningful real-world practicum and student teaching experiences in exemplary DLL programs.** These models, which target underrepresented groups, can be patterned after successful K-12 urban teacher residency initiatives or the Services Employee International Union's Early Educators Apprenticeship. Apprentices are paid to work with expert mentor educators while simultaneously completing coursework. Ensure virtual practicum opportunities are available, particularly during COVID-19 and recovery.
- **Provide ongoing professional development to current early educators, program administrators, and elementary school principals about promising and best practices for serving DLLs and their families.** To date, California has not required education and training specific to DLLs, thus many educators have not had opportunities to take coursework or in-service professional development relevant to serving DLLs and their families. The long waiting lists for the recent \$5M investment of funding for DLL professional development demonstrates the need for such initiatives.



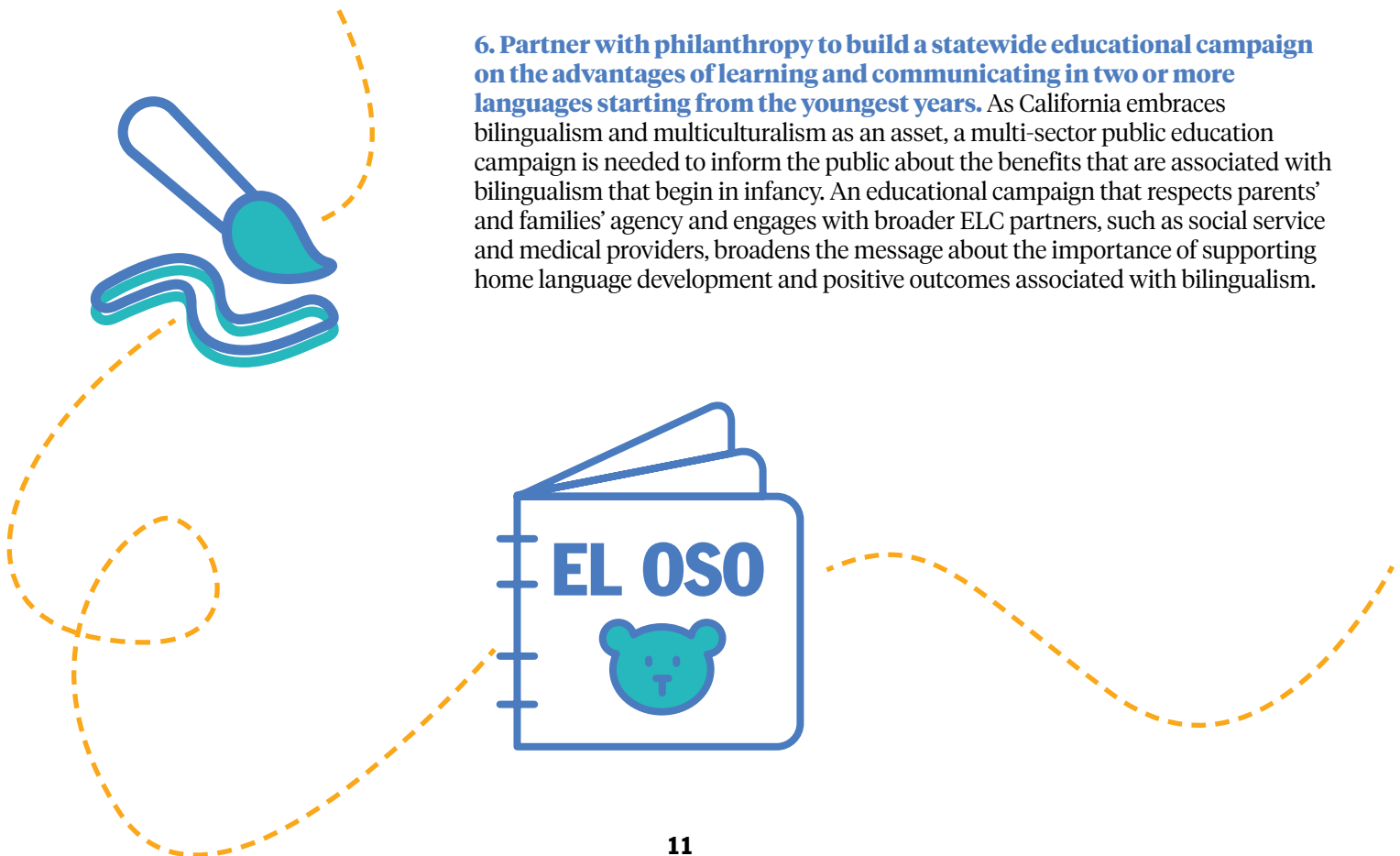


**4. Develop an Early Childhood Integrated Data system that includes the home language and linguistic profile of the child.** A unique identifier will assist stakeholders to better understand the needs of children and families, support continuous program improvement, and provide data about program access, participation, and child outcomes. An integrated data system will provide much-needed articulation between programs serving children birth to age five and K-12 (e.g. CALPADs). Supports for identification of home language is needed at two levels:

- First, at the program level to assist with teaching and learning needs that must be part of a Quality Counts requirement. Conduct a family interview at the time of enrollment and throughout the year to inform early educators and program leadership about the child’s language development and the family’s goals for their child. Develop an assessment to measure home language development across all domains.
- Second, at the state level to inform policymakers about the number of DLLs, their ages, languages spoken, learning setting, and geographical location. ELC policymakers should review how other states have used an early childhood integrated data system and evaluate how California can create, modify, or coordinate existing data sets to incorporate information about DLLs.

**5. Prioritize the expansion of dual-language programs across the early childhood period, including for infants and toddlers.** Dual-language programs aim to intentionally develop both the home language and English across all domains. Support for both the home language and English is the foundation for overall language, cognitive, and healthy racial and ethnic identity development. Dual-language models have shown positive effects on children’s development and academic achievement.

**6. Partner with philanthropy to build a statewide educational campaign on the advantages of learning and communicating in two or more languages starting from the youngest years.** As California embraces bilingualism and multiculturalism as an asset, a multi-sector public education campaign is needed to inform the public about the benefits that are associated with bilingualism that begin in infancy. An educational campaign that respects parents’ and families’ agency and engages with broader ELC partners, such as social service and medical providers, broadens the message about the importance of supporting home language development and positive outcomes associated with bilingualism.



## CONCLUSION

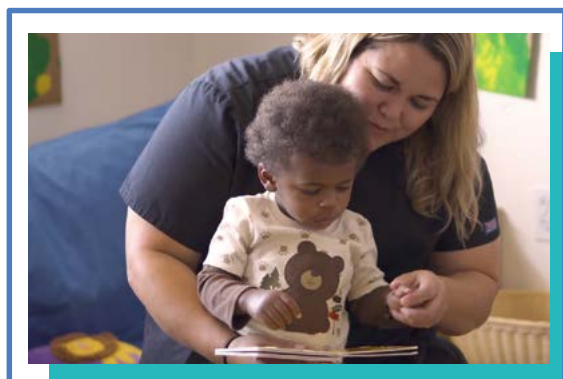
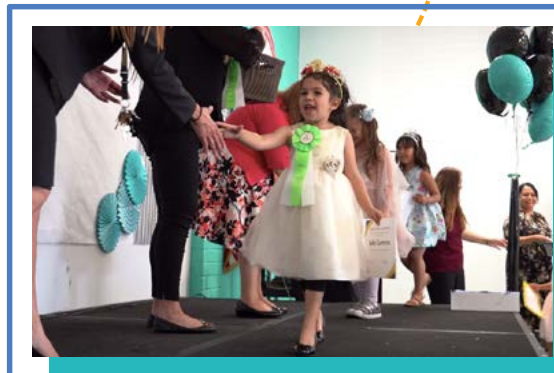
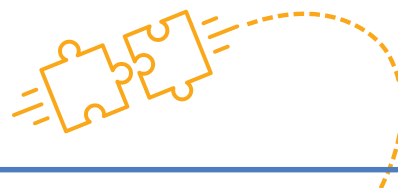


As we respond to our current state of emergency and its aftermath, DLLs should be brought to the center of our policy development and systems change. We have the opportunity right now to build a system that works for our kids. As the largest proportion of California's young child population, they are, in many ways, the future drivers of the state's economic well-being. Their future is our future.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



We would like to express our gratitude to all our partners and experts from the field who provided their input and expertise throughout the development of this addendum. Their on-the-ground experiences during COVID-19 have helped elevate the urgent needs of California's DLL children and their families during this critical moment. We hope these important recommendations are included in California's Master Plan for Early Learning and Care.



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