



June 3, 2020

To: Members, California State Legislature

Re: Prioritizing Learning Loss for Dual Language and English Learners

We appreciate the administration's focus of the use of federal dollars towards mitigating learning loss in the May Revision and working to promote equity for California's most vulnerable students during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you know, students, families, and teachers have had to adapt, almost overnight, to a new online learning environment due to COVID-19 school and child care closures. We know that low-income families and families of diverse language and cultural backgrounds struggle during non-pandemic times, and we need to make certain they have the supports necessary to succeed during the challenging times now and in the immediate future.

We respectfully request that the administration and legislature prioritize Dual Language and English Learners in the early childhood and K-12 systems when discussing student learning loss. We believe this population of children and students is disproportionately impacted by school and child care closures. Distance learning makes it extraordinarily difficult to address the needs of these students who have to learn developmental and academic content in English (their second language) and when possible, in their primary language. In addition, parents of English Learners, oftentimes themselves not proficient in English, feel inadequate and unprepared to support their children at home, especially if the majority of distance learning is in English, if they have children in different grades, and if they work away from home.

In order to protect these students, we also need to begin by supporting teachers instructing Dual Language and English Learners. There is currently a lack of adequate age-appropriate and at-grade level online bilingual instructional materials for our teachers. They require additional professional learning opportunities specific to providing online instruction to Dual Language and English Learners.

Dual Language and English Learners using online and distance learning require more support than their native English-speaking peers. It is important to note that language development is a highly social endeavor requiring multiple opportunities to engage in oral language and biliteracy development throughout the day.

All of these factors contribute to "learning loss" by Dual Language and English Learners and require immediate resources so child development providers, school districts, teachers, and parents can work together to support children and avoid widening the already persistent achievement gap.

As the State decides the future of distance learning strategies and best practices, we ask that Dual Language and English Learners be prioritized and acknowledged in the conversation. We know that education is the greatest equalizer to lift California families out of poverty and we stand ready to assist the administration and legislature in supporting these children and families during this unprecedented time.

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