



# Raising the Bar for English Learners: Tips and Resources to Create Robust Pathways to Multilingualism

The Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) is supporting and amplifying the Department of Education’s goal to create pathways for global engagement by working to provide every student with a pathway to multilingualism while ensuring equitable access to a high-quality education for English learners (ELs) who historically have been underserved.

In addition to having a diverse and qualified multilingual educator workforce, key components to ensuring high-quality and equitable education that fosters multilingualism for ELs include the following:

- Robust family engagement with multilingual families
- Early learning opportunities that help young multilingual learners (MLs) develop proficiency in their home language and in English
- Implementation of effective and equitable dual language programs
- Removal of barriers toward ELs’ acquisition of the Seal of Biliteracy

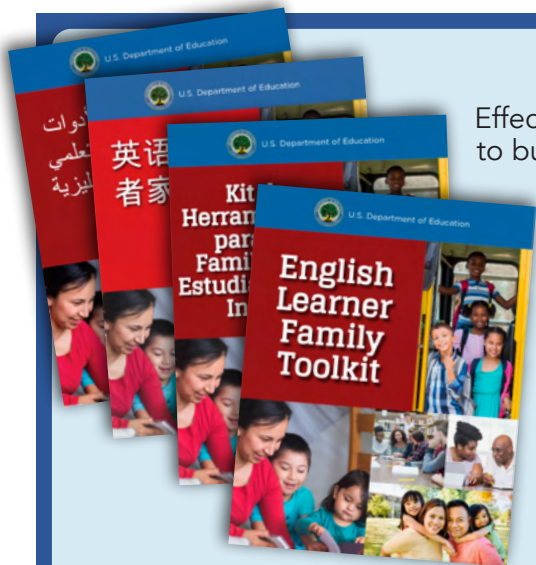
## Family Engagement

Effective school partnerships with EL families require families and educators to build capacity in the **4 Cs: Capabilities, Connections, Cognition, and Confidence**<sup>1</sup>

Adhering to federal regulations is essential to building trust and opening lines of communication with EL families. For example,

- schools must ensure meaningful communication with limited English proficient parents in a language they can understand.
- schools must notify limited English proficient parents of information about any program, service, or activity of a school district that is called to the attention of parents who are proficient in English.

Involving EL and newcomer families in their child’s education is linked to improved academic achievement, including higher grades, and reduced dropout rates.<sup>2</sup>



One way to engage newcomer families is to identify students who may qualify for language assistance services. The most commonly used tool by districts as part of the identification process is the home language survey (HLS). Did you know that administering the HLS is an important first step toward successful engagement with multilingual families?<sup>3</sup> Typical HLS Questions: What language(s) did the student first learn to speak? What language does the student use most often to communicate? What language(s) are spoken in your home?<sup>4</sup>

Check out these resources to learn more:

- [English Learner Family Toolkit](#)
- [Engaging English Learners and Families through Distance Learning](#)
- [OELA Family Engagement Webinar](#)
- [Family-School Engagement fact sheet](#)



Schools that used both email and text messages from a known sender (e.g. the principal) to connect with families, including families of ELs, experienced higher open rates than schools that only used email. [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/southwest/pdf/REL\\_2023143.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/southwest/pdf/REL_2023143.pdf)

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education (n.d). Dual capacity building framework for family-school partnerships. [Dual Capacity Framework Summary \(PDF\) \(ed.gov\)](#). Mapp, K. L. & Bergman, E. (2019). *Dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships (Version 2)*. [www.dualcapacity.org](http://www.dualcapacity.org)

<sup>2</sup> Greenberg Motamedi, J., Porter, L., Taylor, S., Leong, M. Martinez Wenzl, M., & Serrano, D. (2021). *Welcoming, registering, and supporting newcomer students: A toolkit for educators of immigrant and refugee students in secondary schools*. [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/northwest/pdf/REL\\_2021064.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/northwest/pdf/REL_2021064.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Education. Office of English Language Acquisition (2023). Newcomer toolkit. [Newcomer Toolkit \(ed.gov\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> Maryland State Department of Education (2023). [Home Language Surveys \(English\)](#)



Check out these resources to learn more:

- [Young Dual Language Learners webinar](#)
- [Enhancing Language Instruction in Early Childhood Education webinar](#)
- [Effective Instructional Practices for Early Childhood Education Teachers teaching brief](#)
- [Dual Language Learners in Early Care and Education fact sheet](#)
- [Head Start Enrollment fact sheet](#)
- [Dual Language Learners and State-Funded Preschool fact sheet](#)

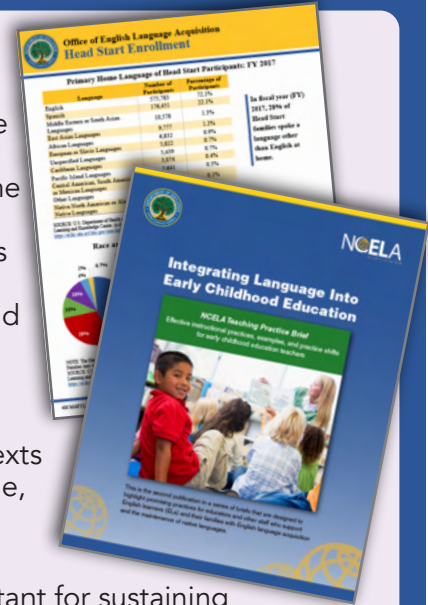
## Early Learning

Quality early learning experiences for ELs embrace an assets orientation that capitalizes on children’s home languages, cultures, knowledge, and experiences and promotes meaningful partnerships with families and communities.<sup>5</sup>

Routinely engaging ELs in interactive book reading experiences with complex texts promotes content knowledge, oral language, academic

language, and emergent literacy development in both languages.<sup>6</sup>

Heritage language programs in early learning programs are particularly important for sustaining and strengthening tribal cultures.<sup>7</sup>



**Did You KNOW?** Dual language learner (DLL) households were less likely than English language families to enroll in center-based early care and education (25% compared to 31%) and more likely than English language families to rely on parental care only (51% compared to 38%).<sup>8</sup>

## Dual Language Learning

Language processing and literacy development in the bilingual mind differs from the monolingual mind because the new language and literacy system is developed in the presence of, and in interaction with, an existing language system.<sup>9</sup>

Bilingual programs that foster the development of two language and literacy systems (e.g., in English and Spanish; English and Mandarin; etc.) boost self-esteem and cultural pride and promote social justice.<sup>10</sup> Effective bilingual programs will

- intentionally connect language environments.
- provide opportunities for students to make cross-language and cross-cultural connections.
- use dual language assessments.
- use literacy for and in academic study in both languages.<sup>11</sup>

**Did You KNOW?** In SY 2019–20 over 73% of state educational agencies (SEAs) reported offering dual language programs to ELs.<sup>12</sup>

Check out these resources to learn more:

- [Effective Literacy Instruction for Multilingual Learners webinar](#)
- [Dual Language Programs fact sheet](#)
- [Spotlight on Multilingualism podcast](#)
- [Dual Language Education podcast part 1 and part 2](#)



<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition (2020). *Integrating language into early childhood education*. [Integrating Language Into Early Childhood Education](#)

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition (2020). *Dual language learners in early care and education fact sheet*. [Dual Language Learners in Early Care and Education Fact Sheet](#)

<sup>9</sup> Office of English Language Acquisition (2023). *Webinar: Effective literacy instruction for multilingual learners*. [Effective Literacy Instruction for Multilingual Learners: What it is and What it Looks Like | NCELA - English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Educational Programs](#)

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition (2023). *The biennial report to congress on the implementation of the Title III state formula grant program: School years 2018–2020*. [The Biennial Report to Congress On the Implementation of the Title III State Formula Grant Program, School Years 2018–2020 \(ed.gov\)](#)

