Playbook Introduction

Career-connected learning is an educational strategy that combines high-quality academic instruction, skill-based learning, and real-world experiences to prepare students with the knowledge and skills that they need to pursue their college and career goals. Career-connected learning can be delivered in a variety of ways, including in core content classes, through career and technical education (CTE) programs, in partnership with community and technical colleges, and through work-based learning experiences like job fairs, job shadows, internships, pre-apprenticeships, and registered apprenticeship programs. All young people, including English Learners (ELs), deserve equitable access to career-connected learning that provides the opportunity to gain meaningful work experience, college credits, an industry credential, and the benefits of career and academic advisement.

An English Learner (EL) is defined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as an individual or student aged 3-21 who was not born in the United States, or whose native language is not English, and who is in enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school. Additionally, under this definition a Native American or Alaska Native student may also be an EL if they come from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on their level of English language proficiency, or whose native language is a language other than English.[1] For the purpose of this document, a multilingual learner (ML) refers to a student who can read, write, listen, and speak in more than one language at various levels of proficiency. Many states refer to ELs as defined in the ESEA as MLs. It is important to note that although an EL may fall under the definition of a ML, not all MLs are formally identified as ELs. For these reasons, the U.S. Department of Education does not use these terms interchangeably. Where provisions apply to only ELs, they are referred to as such.[2]

Promoting career-connected learning for ELs is particularly of high importance as ELs are a growing force in our nation's schools and will be essential to meeting national workforce needs. In fact, the percentage of public school students in the United States who were ELs was higher in fall 2021 (10.6 percent, or 5.3 million students) than in fall 2011 (9.4 percent, or 4.6 million students). In fall 2021, across the 50 states and the District of Columbia, the percentage of public school students who were ELs ranged from 0.8 percent in West Virginia to 20.2 percent in Texas. For a state-by-state breakdown and further statistics on the U.S. public school EL population, please refer to the U.S. Department of Education's webpage on English Learners in Public Schools.

As a nation, we need to do more to recognize that being multilingual, multiliterate, and multicultural is an asset both in our classrooms and in our places of work, and to encourage leaders at the state and local levels to work together to invest, promote, and support students who are ELs and MLs to ensure that language development is a core aspect of career-connected learning, which, when developed together, can help students to boost postsecondary and career access, earn valued industry credentials, and connect our nation's youth to the global economy.

[1] Section 8101 (20) of the ESEA defines "English learner" as an individual— (A) who is aged 3 through 21; (B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school; (C)(i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; (ii)(I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and (D) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual— (i) the ability to meet the challenging state academic standards; (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.

[2] Retrieved from: https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/multilingual-learners

ELs can benefit from greater participation in career-connected learning, which has been shown to help students forge direct and durable linkages between what they learn in school, their culture and language and literacy, and their personal and professional interests for their futures. For example:

- In California, an independent study found that students who participated in programming that combines college and career preparation were more likely to graduate from high school and earned more credits on average. Students participating in Linked Learning were more likely than peers to report that they received guidance from adults regarding postsecondary education planning and that their career pathway experiences helped them develop skills needed for success after high school, including confidence, organizational skills, and professionalism.
- Nationally, the average 4-year high school graduation rate for school year 2021–22 for CTE concentrators, (i.e., students who take two or more courses in a CTE program or program of study) is 96 percent—11 percentage points higher than the average rate for all students. However, ELs continue to be underrepresented in CTE and could be missing out on access to the benefits that CTE can provide. Nationally, of the more than 1 million ELs in grades 9-12, only 8 percent were CTE participants and 5 percent were CTE concentrators in school year 2021-22, but there is variation by state.
- A multi-year, independent study of 16 school districts participating in the Youth Career Connect program—a high school-based program that includes employer partnerships, integrated academic and career curricula, work-based learning, and individualized career and academic counseling—found that the program led to gains in student attendance and credit accumulation, particularly for students who participated in an internship, had a mentor, and/or completed an individualized education and career development plan.
- In North Carolina, high school students who participated in a CTE dual enrollment program were six times more likely to earn college credits while in high school, twice as likely to graduate high school, and were more likely to enroll in college than their peers by nine percentage points. However, ELs are often underrepresented in dual enrollment, which is evidenced by research in California that found that EL dual enrollment participation was below state averages. The study notes that 5.2 percent of EL students were taking CTE dual enrollment courses compared to 9.3 percent of all 11th graders taking CTE dual enrollment.

Raise the Bar

The U.S. Department of Education (Department) has several strategies focused on career-connected pathways for all students and how to increase engagement of ELs and MLs in CTE. Through Secretary Cardona's Raise the Bar initiative, the Department has launched two key priorities to support this work in states and districts.

Unlocking Career Success

Unlocking Career Success is one of the priority initiatives within Secretary Cardona's Raise the Bar initiative, and it is an interagency program that reimagines how our nation's high schools prepare all students to thrive in their future education and careers. The initiative blurs the lines between high school, college, and career to provide students with accelerated and innovative opportunities to earn college credits and gain real-world career experiences. This joint effort across the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Commerce supports public and private sector leaders, government agencies, and other community-based organizations to help students earn postsecondary degrees and industry-recognized credentials that our employers need, and our economy demands. Unlocking Career Success seeks to strengthen systems of multiple pathways to success, fulfilling the promise of education as the key to economic and social mobility and providing our students with rewarding, joyful, and purposeful college and career pathways that lead them to reach their endless potential.

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Pathways to Multilingualism

Pathways to Multilingualism is an interagency initiative designed to increase access to high-quality language programs for all students, expand access to a high-quality education for all ELs, and develop and grow a diverse educator workforce that can effectively serve our ELs and MLs. This joint effort across the U.S. Department of Education focuses students, their families, their communities, and their educators on addressing barriers that ELs may encounter and to increase opportunities for students to become multilingual, multiliterate, and multicultural to be college and career ready. We know that the number of people in the United States who speak a language other than English at home has nearly tripled over the last three decades, and our nation's students and workforce are continuing to grow more diverse and more globally connected. But only 20 percent of the U.S. population can converse in two or more languages, which impacts the amount of supports we provide to students as well as our nation's economic impact.

Actions

State educational agencies, local educational agencies, schools, community-based organizations, and business and industry can increase pathways to multilingualism through career-connected learning to Raise the Bar for student success by taking steps to:

1. Leverage Federal funds to support ELs and CTE.

- Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) is designed to ensure that ELs attain English proficiency and develop high levels of academic achievement in English as well as assist educators and schools in sustaining effective language instruction and educational programs. This program can also support ELs' access to high-quality education programs such as CTE by providing supplemental supports they need to participate in the programs. Funding under Title III can be used to support ELs in career-connected learning, which includes dual enrollment, and to help students leverage their language skills within an occupational program while at the same time addressing their learning needs.
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires public schools to take affirmative steps to ensure that ELs can meaningfully participate in their schools' educational programs and services. Schools must effectively implement a sound educational approach for EL students and adequately communicate with parents with limited English proficiency (LEP) about important school-related information in languages they can understand. Data reported to the Office for Civil Rights' Civil Rights Data Collection shows that ELs were only 3 percent of the students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses and Dual Enrollment or Dual Credit programs.
- The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins V) supports states in their implementation of CTE programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels. This support includes strategies that promote equity in CTE through data analysis; targeted funding for special populations, in which ELs are named; as well as technical assistance which could include professional development and the engagement of stakeholders that represent students who are members of special populations described in a resource from the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP).
    - Perkins V also requires secondary and postsecondary institutions to conduct a comprehensive local needs assessment (CLNA) to identify and address underlying issues that pose barriers to students who are members of special populations to access and be successful in CTE. The CLNA can be used to direct local funds and help to make the benefits of CTE more visible to students and families who are members of special populations (i.e., English Learners).

2. Incorporate tools for students, families, and educators to better engage ELs and MLs in career-connected learning.

Action Items for Students and Parents:

- Engage with your child's school to become familiar with how to enroll your students, navigate the U.S. school system, and advocate for the services and programs available to your student. The English Learner Family Toolkit was created to help students and families to choose education services that meet their needs and interests. Educators can also use the toolkit as a

resource to effectively engage with families and students. Additional information on local, state, and Federal laws that outline the rights afforded to ELs can be found here: Title III of the ESEA, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Perkins V.

- Explicitly connect the economic and social value of learning multiple languages to CTE and career-connected learning pathway initiatives, particularly in materials or course catalogues that are designed for students and families. Delaware Pathways, which is a statewide CTE program, showcases how students who are multilingual receive higher wages compared with monolingual employees. The state provides information for students interested in becoming an educator to see what target languages are of value in the industry and how wages increase as the student becomes proficient in additional languages.
- Participate in your school's career-connected educational programs, which can help students and families to better understand what industries and occupations and related educational programs exist in their community. For example, San Clemente High School's Meet the Industry Night helps to make students and their families aware of careers and the types of postsecondary opportunities that exist in the community.
- High school students can explore career connected pathways that allow for early college or dual enrollment with partners such as local community college, work-based learning experiences connected to areas of interest, and options to earn industry credentials while still in high school.

Action Items for Educators:

- Create awareness of the benefits of multilingualism (Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Hmong, Somali, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Russian, Haitian Creole, and Portuguese) for parents, students, and staff and consider these benefits when designing and implementing career-connected pathways.
- Create awareness about programs that are designed for students and families in CTE. Families play a critical role in the education of their children and have a strong influence on the interests, talents, and skills that they bring with them to school. As described in a Dear Colleague letter jointly issued by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, schools must provide information and communication with families in a language they understand to help families and students as they navigate important educational decisions, including when and how to enroll in CTE and other career-connected learning programs.
- Engage all families in decision-making about their students' educational options, which includes leveraging out-of-school time, summer learning, and flexible scheduling. This could include engaging LEP parents during the Perkins V CLNA process to ensure that ELs do not have barriers to participate in dual enrollment or work-based learning programs which are part of career pathways. The English Learner Family Toolkit includes strategies and resources to guide and support local educational agencies and schools to engage families and students.
- Identify and address barriers that impact EL enrollment in CTE and advanced coursework. Use the Perkins V CNLA process to assess whether EL-specific coursework may interfere with the scheduling of CTE coursework and assess needs for professional learning opportunities for CTE instructors to better support ELs in their classrooms. In addition, use the Perkins V CNLA process to leverage strategic partnerships with organizations in the community to meet families where they are, making sure they are empowered with information and an asset-based learning environment where language and cultural diversity is valued and respected.

3. Consider policies, processes, programs, and practices that increase access to and success in career-connected learning for ELs and MLs.

Action Items for Local Leaders (e.g., principals, superintendents, mayors, and county executives):

- Consider policies and practices relevant to alternative schools, dropout prevention and re-engagement, and adult education. Pay careful attention to policies and practices related to accountability, course placement, graduation requirements, credit accrual, CTE, work-based learning, dual enrollment, and college admissions requirements. Collectively, these policies and practices shape the educational experiences and trajectories of students, which can and should include ELs.
- Leverage funding streams across agencies, organizations, and programs. For example, in California, Elk Grove Unified School District braids CTE and Title III funds to develop units of instruction bridging computer science and English language development. CTE and EL specialist teachers worked together to develop the lessons and teach in pairs. Transfer of credits is made easier by the fact that computer science and engineering pathways are offered at nearly all of the district's high schools.
- Familiarize yourself with current state and national data, collect local and site level data, and use data to determine what percentage of ELs are currently enrolled in CTE programs, how those numbers compare with other student groups, and which students are successful. For example, Ohio conducts "equity labs" to analyze data on special populations and identify the largest and most pressing gaps.
- Create awareness for CTE students about the opportunities that the Seal of Biliteracy presents, which is available to students who are able to demonstrate proficiency in English and their heritage language or another language being learned in school. Validation, particularly when it is displayed on students' transcripts or learning records, that a student is bilingual and biliterate can open doors to postsecondary education and career in high demand and high paying jobs.
- Acknowledge linguistic and cultural assets when engaging families and students and empower students to shape their educational journeys. In Colorado, Douglas County School District has a student advisory group that serves as a focus group for school board and school system personnel. This structure empowers students to share their voice in policymaking and to provide feedback on the implementation of cultural assets.
- Collaborate with business and industry partners and other local leaders to identify the skills, occupations, and talent needs of your community and economic region, and to coordinate public and private partnerships that support diverse student populations. For example, the Anaheim Union High School District developed a business partnership to support the Amazon Future Engineer program.

Action Items for State Leaders (e.g., State K-12 and higher education agencies, State and local workforce development boards, and Governors):

- Consider innovative funding models to support diverse student populations. For example, Tennessee's Innovative School Model is a grant program that supports partnerships between local educational agencies, postsecondary institutions, and employers to rethink educational models that prepare students for postsecondary education and career.

- Create and implement policy that is responsive to the needs of students' cultural and linguistic assets. For example, the California English Learner Roadmap supports local educational agencies to incorporate EL education into local program design.
- Provide guidance and/or targeted funding opportunities to local educational agencies to plan and implement CTE and other career-connected learning that focuses on equitable access for ELs, opportunities for MLs, and pathways to multilingualism for all. For example, the Funding to Support Equitable Pathways highlights promising practices from five states that braided resources to support high-quality, equitable career pathways. Also consider and provide guidance on language assessments and related funding as it pertains to students' academic and technical skill development.
- Collaborate with local industry and workforce partners to identify the industry demand for employees that speak more than one language and establish a vision for ELs and MLs within CTE. This includes support for the development of CTE and career pathways that focus on multilingualism.

Additional Resources

- The U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition has created a fact sheet on College Credit Bearing Classes to highlight the need to increase the number of ELs in college credit bearing courses.
- The Office of English Language Acquisition created the following resource in multiple languages (English, Spanish, Chinese and Arabic) to highlight the benefits of CTE for ELs and how schools can provide needed support for their participation.
- The National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity created this two-page overview of key points on special populations in Perkins V, including how Federal funds can be used to promote increased access and support.
- Jobs for the Future published a report outlining best practices when designing dual enrollment to reach English learners. Additionally, Community College Research Center at the Teachers college issued a report on how state systems can support practitioner efforts to strengthen dual enrollment, including supports for ELs.
- Advance CTE developed an overview of Federal funding streams that can be blended or braided to develop and sustain a more integrated career-connected learning ecosystem.
- ¡Adelante! A Community Asset Mapping Approach to Increase College and Career Readiness for Rural Latinx High School Students describes an asset mapping process that reinforces students' and families' connections to their culture, school, and community while simultaneously collecting data on community assets and needs. This two-generation approach could be used to complement asset mapping processes more focused on the education and workforce systems—helping to ensure that systems' efforts reflect the assets, needs, and aspirations of students and families.
- REL Northwest published the Career and Technical Education in Oregon: Exploring who participates and the outcomes they achieve (2020) and REL Southwest published Biliteracy Seals in a Large Urban District in New Mexico: Who Earns Them and How do they Impact College Outcomes? (2022)
- Migrant Policy Institute published the Unlocking Opportunities: Supporting English Learners' Equitable Access to Career and Technical Education (2023).
- American Translators Association published A Translator's Value(s) in a Shifting Market on the translators and interpreters industry and its value to the whole economy (2023).

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