SUPPORTING CALIFORNIA’S
DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNER & ENGLISH LEARNER SUCCESS

SIGNIFICANT POPULATION OF DLLs/ELs IN CALIFORNIA
California is home to the largest population of English learners (ELs) in the United States, with over 1.3 million enrolled in its public school system and served in all 58 counties. Most ELs are among the state’s youngest learners:

- 72 percent of ELs are in elementary schools;
- 33 percent of kindergarteners are ELs; and
- 60 percent of children birth to five live in a household where English is not the primary language.

The dual language learner (DLL)/EL population represents every racial/ethnic group and includes both US- and foreign-born students. As the state serves nearly a third (29 percent) of the nation’s 4.6 million ELs, California is uniquely positioned to lead the nation on DLL/EL education.

DLLs EXCEL WITH HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION
Research in the past two decades has emphasized the critical window of the first five years for children’s linguistic, cognitive, social, and emotional development. Numerous studies have shown that high-quality early care and education (ECE) prepares our children for success in the K–12 system, helps close the achievement gap, and can lead to substantial cost savings for school districts.

While early learning addresses the educational opportunity gap present prior to school entrance for all students, the research shows that DLLs may benefit more relative to their monolingual peers, as they begin with lower levels of English comprehension. As the state works to increase access to high quality ECE for all children, it will be imperative to ensure ECE quality is defined to include a DLL lens that recognizes the assets and unique needs of DLLs. Further, ECE quality efforts need to support educators to intentionally build both the home language and English of DLLs to set them on course for school success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERMINOLOGY</th>
<th>Dual Language Learner (DLL)</th>
<th>English Learner (EL)</th>
<th>Dual Language Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definitions</strong></td>
<td>Children, birth to five, learning two+ languages simultaneously or learning a second language while developing home language.</td>
<td>Students in K–12 education who have a home language other than English, and are learning English as a second language.</td>
<td>Programs that use both English and students' home languages and aim to develop both languages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOME LANGUAGE SUPPORTS STUDENTS’ SUCCESS

Research over the past two decades provides insight into the brain and the language development process of young children. When provided with high-quality, intentional, and consistent early learning experiences in their home language and English, DLLs are set on a positive trajectory for school success.

Studies show that:

- the brain is most receptive to language learning in the earliest years of life;
- children are not confused by learning multiple languages, rather, the brain is wired to learn any language in the world; and
- home language is central to developing proficiency in other languages, children’s cognitive and socio-emotional development, and academic achievement.

SUPPORTING INSTRUCTIONAL NEEDS OF YOUNG DLLs

Intentional and developmentally-appropriate instruction that meets their specific learning needs are critical. Two approaches recommended for DLLs are:

1. **Dual Language Approach**: Instruction with proportions in the home language and English (e.g., 50 percent Mandarin and 50 percent English; 90 percent Spanish and 10 percent English, etc.) to support simultaneous development of both languages and promote bilingualism and biliteracy.

2. **English with Home Language Support**: English is the main language of instruction with strategies to support DLLs’ home languages while they are learning English. Strategies include bridging student experiences and cultural reference points to new instructional material, a focus on oral language development, visual cues, and interactive storybook reading in both languages. Experts do not recommend English-only instruction for DLLs. Home language loss can have negative long-term consequences for a child’s academic and social development.

LANGUAGE PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG DLLs

The following are examples of existing or newly launched ECE programs that build bilingualism.

**San Francisco Unified School District**: The district offers ten DLL pre-kindergarten programs: four are in Cantonese and six are in Spanish.

**Los Angeles Unified School District**: In fall 2017, the district opened dual language early learning programs in transitional kindergarten, expanded transitional kindergarten, full-day and part-day state preschool programs.

There are 10 programs at eight sites. Seven sites provide Spanish and one site provides Korean.

**Long Beach Unified School District**: In partnership with the district in fall 2017, Educare Los Angeles at Long Beach became the 22nd Educare in the nation. Educare Los Angeles at Long Beach provides early learning English-Spanish dual language programs and English classrooms with home language support.

California is uniquely positioned to lead the nation in advancing DLL/EL education, policy, and practice, and to create bilingual pathways for all students.

For the full report, visit [advancementprojectca.org/dlls](http://advancementprojectca.org/dlls) or contact [education@advanceproj.org](mailto:education@advanceproj.org).