

## Bright Spots

### Exemplary Supports for Emerging Bilingual Learners



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## Introduction and Summary of Findings

In this report, we profile 27 efforts in 13 states—Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Idaho, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, and Washington (and one national effort), highlighting how local communities, states, and tribes are working to nurture the assets and meet the needs of emerging bilingual learners. We profile linguistically and culturally responsive efforts – which we refer to as Bright Spots – that promote and support the development of young emerging bilingual learners, their families, and their caregivers and identify approaches and practices that other states, communities, policymakers, and funders can build upon. These efforts address aspects of the early childhood systems from direct supports for children and families to the education, training, and professional development of early educators as well as quality standards and quality improvement systems. They show the importance of responsive programs and of training, competencies, and standards. They demonstrate the significance of working to change the context surrounding programs and policies by developing shared vision, leadership, public engagement, and family voice and leadership. Furthermore, they display the importance of connections and linkages across systems between early learning and nutrition, transportation, health, and all the family serving systems.<sup>1</sup>

### The Need for this Report

This report is particularly salient because of the current unprecedented federal early childhood funding and the efforts to ensure that such funding continues. It is intended to provide foundational information to fuel larger conversations about how policies can recognize the value of learning more than one language from birth and what kinds of strategies might be replicated or adapted and scaled with increased federal and state funding for young children and their families.

Significant research has demonstrated the value of learning multiple languages and educated, affluent families exhibit awareness of this information by enrolling their children in dual language programs in schools and camps. The early childhood field, however, has not achieved the levels of success at scaling best and promising practices for emerging bilingual learners that one might have predicted given the robust research base and the demographics of the young child population, which reflects the growing language diversity of the country.

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<sup>1</sup> We draw from our understanding of the aspects of systems as described in Julia Coffman’s A Framework for Evaluating Systems Change, BUILD Initiative, 2007. <https://buildinitiative.org/resource-library/a-framework-for-evaluating-system-initiatives/>

## Who are US Emerging Bilingual Learners?

The term **emerging bilingual learner**<sup>2</sup> is used here to refer to children birth to age five<sup>3</sup> who are learning two (or more) languages at the same time or are learning a second language while continuing to develop their first (home) language.<sup>4</sup> These children have at least one adult who speaks a language other than English in their home. According to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, over 350 languages are spoken by families in the United States. Over eleven million children in the United States are emerging bilingual learners; Spanish is the most common language spoken in **emerging bilingual learner households** (Park, O'Toole, & Katsiaficas, 2017). However, there is also immense heterogeneity within the emerging bilingual learner population. While most **emerging bilingual learners** in the US come from Latin America (primarily Mexico) and Asia, they represent all major racial/ethnic groups, and include both US- and foreign-born children, refugees, and immigrants (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2017).

**Emerging bilingual learners** are more likely than monolingual children to live in poverty and in families with low levels of education (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2017). While emerging bilingual learners represent one-third of all children aged 0-8 in the US, they represent over 50 percent of the children in families with low incomes. **Emerging bilingual learner children** are less likely than monolingual children to be enrolled in “high-quality” early care and education programs, yet they are also the children who are likely to benefit the most from these programs (Park, O'Toole, & Katsiaficas, 2017).

## The Benefits of Being Bilingual

Despite the challenges that emerging bilingual learners often face, they have significant assets that, if honored and nurtured, will serve them well in their education and careers. Research demonstrates that fluency in more than one language is associated with benefits in cognitive, social, and emotional development and may also serve as a protective factor against degenerative brain diseases later in life (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2017).

All children have the capacity to learn multiple languages from infancy. In fact, the earlier children are exposed to language in a consistent and ongoing way by competent speakers of that language, the more proficient they will be (Espinosa & Magruder, 2015). When a child's home language is spoken in the classroom along with English, there is evidence that children are better able to transfer their knowledge and skills from their home language to English (Castro, Garcia, & Markos, 2013). Further, children who have a balance of skills in both their home language and in English when they are in preschool, and

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<sup>2</sup> The terminology is in flux. The term multilingual learners seems to be in growing use although in K-12 many cling to the term English Learners. Dual Language Learners is a popular term in early childhood and means the same as emerging bilingual learner. Some leaders prefer to place the emphasis on the child and opt for the term emergent bilingual children. More discussions are required to determine how to speak about, and be inclusive of, children who are learning native/indigenous language and are part of revitalization efforts, so expect more change.

<sup>3</sup> **Emerging bilingual learners** can also refer to individuals who are older.

<sup>4</sup> Definition from Early Edge CA <https://earlyedgecalifornia.org/ece-priorities/dual-language-learners/>.

continue to receive supports in both languages, have been shown to outperform monolingual children at third grade. While the gift of bilingualism may not be evident at kindergarten entry because the vocabulary of **emerging bilingual learners** may be distributed across both languages, eventually, these children will reap the benefits of being bilingual (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2017).

## Supporting Bilingualism is a Process in which Families and Teachers Play a Role

Supporting the learning and development of **emerging bilingual learners** is a complex process requiring certain principles be followed. Primary among these is that the same elements of high-quality early care and education are essential to supporting all children's optimal outcomes, regardless of their home language. Like all children, **emerging bilingual learners** need to experience frequent language interaction that is responsive to their interests, expands upon their existing knowledge and language abilities, and exposes them to a rich vocabulary. However, **emerging bilingual learners** also need intentional and systematic instructional supports that are specific and individualized.

Families are critical partners in ensuring that children achieve the benefits of bilingualism. Families need to understand that preserving their child's home language will not only provide a better foundation for English language acquisition but will also set their child on a path to greater academic success in all domains. Without a family's strong commitment to home language support, children are inclined to use English and will gradually lose their home language.

Early educators, regardless of setting, need to support young **emerging bilingual learners'** home language, spend time getting to know each child and their family, and ensure that children have access to culturally familiar materials that represent children's home languages and cultures. Early educators must scaffold children's existing conceptual and language knowledge and implement individualized oral language strategies that ensure that young emerging bilingual learners understand the underlying concepts. Children's home languages must be explicitly supported, or they will decline once they are exposed to English (Espinosa & Magruder, 2015).

Teachers need to establish a connection and partnership with families early on through individualized conversations and understanding of the children and families. For monolingual teachers, this partnership is particularly important since parents and other extended family members can be critical components of the language enrichment strategy and can even volunteer in the classroom to bring in the home language.

### Provide linguistically and culturally sensitive supports for families

Emerging bilingual learners are supported when communities and systems value and nurture home language and culture and provide linguistically and culturally sensitive supports for families to engage in their children's learning from an early age.

Bi-directional family engagement is a best practice in early care and education programs and a hallmark of quality regardless of the cultural and linguistic background of the families.

Profiles included in this report highlight the ways in which children’s families and the broader community can be engaged deeply and respectfully in developing solutions to support children’s learning and preserve their home languages. Additionally, there are examples of what high quality bi-directional family engagement looks like in practice for families whose home language is not English and for **emerging bilingual learners**.

## **An Underpaid and Undervalued Workforce**

While COVID-19 and its associated health risks for early educators has impacted the supply of teachers, low compensation and undervaluing of the field have been culprits for far longer. Early educators are leaving the field for better paying jobs in the K-12 system and in other fields entirely.

Despite research showing that the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of teachers affects student outcomes (Zepeda, Castro, & Cronin, 2011), which supports the need for more teachers who match the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students, these teachers are few and not well-supported. Our current system requires bilingual educators, for example, to do the additional work of translating materials from English, but they are neither compensated for this additional work, nor given the extra planning time to support it (Amanti, 2019).

The education and early childhood fields are out of step with the rest of the US business community in terms of neglecting the value of bilingual educators. The US Census and the American Community Survey show that, on average, fluent bilingual Spanish-English speakers earn \$2-3,000 more per year than monolingual workers. Specifically for Spanish, the second most spoken language in the US, people who speak Spanish and English, will have better job prospects, and will be more desirable to businesses and employers, who will in turn be disposed to pay them higher wages.<sup>5</sup> This makes good sense. The growing Spanish speaking population domestically and internationally increasingly expects companies to provide services and supports in multiple languages. The US (early) education system, however, is out of step with the growing needs of the economic and business communities in addition to the young children it was established to serve. (Martínez García, E. & Martínez García M. T. 2022).

## **The Inadequacy of the System in Supporting the Bilingual Workforce**

Despite the strong research showing that emerging bilingual learners are at an advantage when they are born into a home that speaks a language other than English, most states do not require that early educators receive specific preparation and training to help support and preserve children’s home language. According to research (Maxwell, Lim, & Early, 2006), fewer than 15 percent of early childhood teacher preparation programs require coursework on teaching emerging bilingual learners. There is also a lack of capacity within institutions of higher education in general, and early childhood education

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<sup>5</sup> Bilingualism and specifically speaking Spanish and English has not always been seen or treated as an economic asset. In earlier decades, the same surveys found that bilingual workers earned less than monolingual workers unless they lived in geographic areas with high concentrations of Spanish speakers or worked in certain industries, but in today’s “majority minority” landscape, Spanish-English bilingualism is evaluated differently in many industries.

teacher preparation programs specifically, to design and teach curricula that will prepare educators to effectively support emerging bilingual learners.

Some—but not many—state QRIS incent trainings that would better equip early educators to support young bilingual children. Alaska’s Learn & Grow provides rating points to programs that complete specific trainings related to cultural responsiveness and reflective practice, for example, and the state has culturally relevant early childhood core knowledge and competencies as well as early learning guidelines and quality standards that relate to culture at diversity. Minnesota’s Parent Aware is an outlier in its extensive commitment to family and cultural responsiveness. When describing its approach in the [Quality Compendium](#), Minnesota staff wrote: “Parent Aware addresses educational equity. It is designed to improve access to quality early care and education programs, particularly for children facing opportunity gaps by income, race, ethnicity, and language.” In addition, the update of Parent Aware’s Standards and Indicators included a strong focus on culturally responsive practices such as:

- Incorporating children's home languages
- Building partnerships with families
- Providing culturally consistent care
- Showing a deep sense of respect for families' cultures
- Differentiating problem behavior from culturally different patterns of behavior
- Strengthening families by connecting them with their communities, and
- Teaching with awareness of your own culture, and knowledge of others' cultures.

Unfortunately, these state examples are not the norm. Lack of teacher preparation and support contributes to **emerging bilingual learners** entering kindergarten without the skills they need to be successful; they often lose the opportunity to develop a strong foundation in their home language.

The expectation and requirement that lead teachers have a bachelor’s degree may also perpetuate the inequities within the system and diminish the opportunities for emerging bilingual learners to have access to teachers who share their racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic characteristics. In several states, many educators of color, and those who may be better equipped to support emerging bilingual learners because they themselves are bilingual, are unable to become lead teachers because they have not had access to higher education. They are kept at a lower paying position with the only way to advance being degree attainment. This “catch-22” is particularly challenging for immigrants and refugees who may not qualify for grants or loans, or who may have cultural or religious beliefs that prohibit the borrowing of money.

### **What Effective Professional Development Looks Like**

Research on effective professional development supports for early educators of emerging bilingual learners emphasizes the importance of intensive and consistent approaches that help teachers through appropriate modelling and support while they apply what they learn in the classroom setting. Most educators in the ECE workforce who are going to school are working with children at the same time. Professional development models that involve training, consultation or mentoring, and professional learning communities appear to hold promise (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and

Medicine, 2017). The trainings and consultation help the educators learn and apply new skills, while the Communities of Practice offer a shared learning environment and social support for teachers who are juggling work, school, and family. Central to the early care and education provider role in supporting emerging bilingual learners is establishing and sustaining family-school-community connection and collaboration. Recognizing the many strengths and resources that emerging bilingual learner families have and leveraging those to support children's learning is essential. Professional development supports and tools must strengthen the capacity of early educators and administrators to build and sustain these connections among their program or school, the family, and the community. Children learn language best through social interaction and rich, meaningful conversations and those conversations must occur in all aspects of the child's life and in both languages. Family-school-community partnerships help to reinforce the message that a child's bilingualism is a gift, and that this gift must be nurtured and supported in all contexts of a child's life.

### **The Need for Bilingual Staff Recruitment and Retention Strategies**

In addition to training monolingual educators to be able to support the development of emerging bilingual learners, increasing recruitment and then improving retention of bilingual and multilingual early educators is also an urgent need and must become state and community priorities. The state of New Mexico is providing an incentive pay boost to bilingual early educators in the hopes that it improves retention rates and encourages others to enter the field. The Idaho AEYC and the Idaho QRIS Steps to Quality are employing targeted, localized strategies aimed at recruiting New American early educators into trainings in small cohorts designed to build relationships and trust. These are just two examples of ways that states have approached this important task.

The Bright Spots highlighted for their contribution to building and strengthening the early childhood workforce provide examples of ways in which local communities and organizations have engaged early educators – both licensed and unlicensed – in the design and implementation of educational pathways, comprehensive professional development supports, and tools to support early educators working with emerging bilingual learners.

### **Quality Standards and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems must Recognize the Relationship between Language, Culture, and Quality**

Despite the large body of research demonstrating the value of bilingualism and the importance of family engagement and first language preservation, little progress has been made at incorporating emerging

#### **Embed best practices for emerging bilingual learners in early care and education quality standards and quality support systems**

- Engage families and providers in the re-invention of quality frameworks.
- Provide rewards and incentives for trainings and adoption of best practices related to supporting emerging bilingual learners.
- Think about everything connected to program quality—standards; early educators, their preparation and ongoing training; engagement of families and community, allocation of quality funds; curriculum; materials...

**bilingual learner** supports into measures of quality and QRIS in states. The renewed energy and growth of the movement for racial justice has included a call for a re-examination of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) and an opportunity to rectify the inadequate focus on supporting emerging bilingual learnings.

In some states, the QRIS has recently been called racist by some advocates and provider groups who have either suggested its elimination or transformation. Much of the criticism has related to tiered reimbursement and a sense that funds have been inequitably distributed, supporting those programs most that already have been better able to achieve higher levels of quality. Additional criticisms include the absence (or inadequacy) of culturally and linguistically relevant standards, and an overemphasis on rating programs with instruments and tools that are normed on white, dominant culture practices. Perhaps less loudly—at least at the national level—is any reckoning with how to define “quality” in a way that is specific enough to build systems and funding around, but adaptable enough to reckon with the fact that there are aspects of quality that are culture-bound. Is a “high-quality” program high-quality for a child entering who finds nothing about themselves meaningfully present, not their languages, nor practices that reflect what their family values in terms of child rearing or development, and none of their cultural beliefs? Some elements of quality are universal, and others are not. We need conversation and solutions that recognize that quality is culture bound and informed by the science of early childhood development. Some elements of quality are more easily measurable than others, but those qualifiers are not determinative of their relevance to particular young children and families.

The issue was raised frequently by the individuals interviewed for this report--the issue of how (and by whom) quality is defined, measured, and supported. In part, the growing demand for culturally and linguistically relevant standards was gaining strength at a time when the early care and education field also recognized that the standards and requirements placed on the grossly underpaid provider workforce were not adequately supported and were too complex and burdensome. Nevertheless, we identified Bright Spots and included examples that can be found starting on page 41. They may indicate that the issue of how quality improvement strategies and systems can be reinvented to better support emerging bilingual learners is ready to gain traction. We hope they will inspire more re-envisioning and improvements.

## BRIGHT SPOT PROFILES

### Approach

The bright spots included in this report tell the story of each effort captured through open-ended interviews. This methodology did not follow a prescribed format or cover the same information across profiles. Some of the efforts highlighted are small in scale and localized, while others are focused on systems change. They are organized into the following four themes and takeaways that emerged from the interviews:

- Provide linguistically and culturally sensitive supports for children and families.
- Support bi-directional family engagement in early childhood and family support programs.
- Build and strengthen the bilingual early childhood workforce.
- Embed best practices related to emerging bilingual learners in quality rating and improvement systems.

The table on the following page lists each of the efforts profiled, the state where it is being implemented, the theme(s) it relates to, and the page where the full profile can be found. The profiles follow the chart. We then provide recommendations that emerged from the interviews.

Clearly, these are not the only bright spots. They are examples. The themes are also not an exhaustive list of the areas that require focus and action to better nurture the assets of emerging bilingual learners. Every aspect of the early care and education system and the larger early childhood system of systems must be examined for the best levers for change. When states were developing their grant formulas for the Child Care Stabilization Grants, that was an important time to raise the issue of whether bi- and multi-lingual educators should get premium pay and whether monolingual providers who are trained and teaching multilingual young children should also receive additional compensation for this vital additional skillset. But these issues are important all the time and must be considered in relation to data systems, child care subsidy rates, professional development, teacher competencies, and institutions of higher education. They must be considered centrally when writing federal grant applications such as the Preschool Development Grants Birth to Five or when applying for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grants. Emerging bilingual learners, families whose home language is other than English, and educators and providers whose first language is other than English must all be considered as the integral people they are when building, re-envisioning, and improving our early childhood systems. This report is one contribution to support that thinking and work.

## Summary Table of Emerging Bilingual Learner Bright Spots

State	Project Name	Provide linguistically and culturally sensitive supports for children families	Support bi-directional family engagement in early childhood and family support programs	Build and strengthen the bilingual early childhood workforce	Embed EBL best practices in quality rating and improvement systems	Page
MN	Family Systems Project Pilot, Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio	X	X	X		13
USA	ParentChild+ One-on-One (Core) Model	X	X	X		15
CO	Ready Tots Program and HIPPPY Home Visiting Program	X	X	X		17
MN	Hmong FFN and FCC training project	X		X		19
NM	Native American Early Childhood Education and Care	X		X		20
MA	ParentChild+ Family Child Care Model	X		X		21
MN	Gookonaanig Endaawaad (Grandmas' House)	X	X			22
MI	Siembra Montessori Preschool and Mi Pequeño Mundo Home Visiting	X	X			24
WA	West African Family Preschool and ParentChild+ Home Visiting Program	X	X			26
WA	Circle Time Magazine			X		28
CA	Early Edge Multilingual Learning Online Toolkit			X		30
MI	Great Start to Quality Training for Spanish Speaking FFN providers			X	X	31
MD	CampusLUNA			X		32
NY	Home-based Childcare Network and Training Institute			X		33
MN	La Red Latina de Educación Temprana			X		34
MD	Montgomery College Early Childhood Education Programs			X		35
CO	Pamoja Early Childhood Education Workforce Project			X		37
CA	Language Learning Project Toolkit and GEMS			X	X	39
AK	Alaska Learn and Grow				X	
AZ	Arizona First Steps				X	
CA	Quality Counts California				X	
CA	Tribal Child Care Association of California				X	
CO	Colorado Shines				X	
DC	Capital Quality				X	
ID	Idaho Steps to Quality				X	
MN	Minnesota Parent Aware				X	
NM	New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department				X	

# Bright Spots Profiles

## Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio

<b>Project</b>	Family Systems Project Pilot
<b>Population</b>	Spanish-speaking Latine <sup>6</sup> families with children who are emerging bilingual learners
<b>Primary Language</b>	Spanish
<b>State</b>	Minnesota
<b>Contact</b>	Andrea Martinez, MA, Family Systems Project Manager

[Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio](#) (CLUES) is the largest Latine-led organization in the Midwest and offers a wide range of services to ensure the advancement of social and economic equity and wellbeing for Latines in Minnesota. Through a Whole Family Systems Grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, CLUES began a Family Systems Project in 2019 to empower parents and caregivers to develop creative solutions to prepare young children for school success that are grounded in community empowerment and engagement. The focus of the Family Systems Project is on partnering with parents in the community to strengthen their engagement in their children’s learning. The first step in the project was to recruit a group of Spanish-speaking Latine parents of children ages 0-5 years old from the surrounding community to serve as a Parent Advisory Group (PAG) and to spend time listening to other parents through interviews, workshops, and focused conversations to understand what they need to achieve a successful transition to kindergarten. As a result of these conversations, CLUES and the PAG co-developed four pilot programs. The first of these programs, “Sembrando Éxitos: Padres y Madres como Primeros Maestros” (“Sowing Success: Fathers and Mothers as First Teachers”), was a series of 11 sessions covering a variety of topics including child development, bilingual development, early math, nutrition, mental health, and social-emotional wellbeing. The CLUES staff developed the content and activities in collaboration with external partners and launched the first iteration in February 2021 and the second in fall 2021. Sessions were conducted in Spanish and the supporting resources and materials were either created in Spanish or translated into Spanish.

The project has been successful at increasing parents’ knowledge and understanding of the topics discussed and in making them feel empowered and confident in their ability to teach their child skills.

**“I remember one mother who before the program she didn’t teach any math to her little daughter because she thought she was too little to learn those things and after the program she now knows how to add 2 + 2 and she’s always asking me how to write and spell things.”**

**Andrea Martinez, Family Services Project Manager**

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this report, “e” is used in place of the Spanish-language masculine “o” or Spanish-language feminine “a” (unless it is used in the name of an organization or in a direct quote), to acknowledge the gender fluidity that exists beyond this gender binary. We thank Centro Tyrone Guzman for setting this example.

At the completion of the series, parents are given a toolkit with items for the children, the caregivers, and for themselves, such as bilingual books and guided activities. The parents are asked to participate in evaluating the programs and receive compensation for doing so as recognition that their time is valued.

According to CLUES staff, common parental feedback included that they did not know how to support their children's transition to kindergarten because they did not know how to read or speak English, and many did not know how to read in Spanish. Because numerous parents did not have the experience of someone reading to them as a child, they were not comfortable or confident when it came to reading with their own children. The second program co-developed by families and CLUES staff was an Early Literacy Program consisting of a series of workshops. First, through a partnership with the University of Minnesota, the parents heard from faculty who study how bilingual children learn and how parents can support their home language. In the second workshop, a Latine author shared her book and demonstrated how she reads to her children and the parents also learned about parent-child activities based on her book. In the third workshop, a representative from the St. Paul public library introduced them to the library, helped them to get a library card, and led a focused conversation on the barriers that families experience when accessing resources in the community.

The CLUES Family Systems Grant launched just as the COVID-19 pandemic hit, which caused program leaders to place significant emphasis on assisting families in supporting their children while they were out of school and learning remotely. In addition to providing families with technology, many parents shared that they do not have learning materials at home; they relied on the schools or early childhood education settings to provide them. CLUES staff and the PAG responded to this need by developing the third pilot, the COVID Response Program. This program offered a comprehensive list of resources for families and child development kits developed by CLUES and the PAG that included a guided activity every two weeks. The distribution of guided activities has continued in the form of a monthly bulletin that goes out to parents and includes connections to other resources and opportunities in the community. The evaluation and feedback demonstrated that the toolkit assisted parents in gaining a deeper understanding of the importance of play in children's learning and that they understood how important it was for them to encourage play as well as to participate in play with their children.

Another issue raised in the conversations with the PAG was that many families rely on family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) child care providers and that many FFN providers lack access to supports and services. Using the same community empowerment and listening approach, CLUES and the PAG convened FFN providers, conducted interviews, and focused conversations to gain understanding of their needs. During these conversations, they learned that while online trainings are available in Minnesota through the [DEVELOP tool](#), the system requires providers to create a profile that asks for their social security number, thereby creating a barrier for many in this community. CLUES partnered with the Department of Human Services to change this requirement. The partnership led to the development of a fourth pilot program, which the Department funded, that provides training and resources for FFN providers to promote children's health and development and to learn about licensing options as well as other resources for families. While the program is in its first year, it has been a valuable resource for these providers and families.

## ParentChild+

<b>Project</b>	ParentChild+ One-on-One (Core) Model
<b>Population</b>	Families with Children Two-to-Three Years Old
<b>Primary Languages</b>	Spanish and Guatemalan-Mayan
<b>State</b>	Headquarters in Massachusetts
<b>Contact</b>	Sarah Walzer, J.D., CEO, ParentChild+

Established as a non-profit organization in 1979, [ParentChild+](#) works with local partner agencies that have deep roots within underserved communities to reach the most isolated families, who our systems have been ill set up to reach or serve. Over half of the families speak a home language other than English and over 80 percent have annual incomes below \$25,000. Through its network of sites across the globe, ParentChild+ serves over 7,000 families each year using its core one-on-one model.<sup>7</sup> ParentChild+ works in 15 states and in 6 countries.

When ParentChild+ began, over half of the programs were in school districts because of the benefits of leveraging Title I funds. However, over time, the organization learned that the school districts are not necessarily the “trusted organizations” in the community, and that it was not reaching the families it sought to serve who had thus far been poorly supported by other state services and who needed their services the most. With the influx of United Way funding, ParentChild+ shifted to working more with community-based non-governmental organizations. By focusing on these organizations that had deep roots in the community and were trusted by families, ParentChild+ was able to get the program up and running quickly and build connections with families. While there were some challenges in partnering with these smaller organizations in terms of their lack of infrastructure (e.g., technology, supplies, materials) and internal capacity (e.g., fundraising), their ability to connect with families was invaluable.

In many cases, the partner community organizations do not have deep experience in early childhood programs and may instead provide other services like immigration support, housing, or adult education. They often need support and funding, but they can leverage their other support services to reach families.<sup>8</sup> One example is the [Guatemalan-Mayan Center](#) in Palm Beach, Florida. Its ParentChild+ program has Mayan-speaking<sup>9</sup> staff who work with Guatemalan families for whom Mayan is their first language and Spanish, their second. It is not likely the school district would have Mayan-speaking staff and/or be able to engage these families deeply in the way the Center does.

<sup>7</sup> From <https://www.parentchildplus.org/about/#0>

<sup>8</sup> This model is one that has been important for dissemination of child care stabilization grants and could be even more effective and widely used as future funds are dispersed. The state has little reach and relationship in communities, however, funding organizations with the trust and relationships to expand their scope to share information about funding opportunities, tax implications of accepting funding, how to complete the application, etc. has been effective in states like Michigan where community organizations greatly boosted information dissemination and application rates from first round of grants.

<sup>9</sup> Mayan-speaking staff may speak one or more of the many Mayan languages and dialects spoken in Guatemala as well as in Mexico, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

The ParentChild+ In-home model allows for staff to reach families who might not otherwise have access to high-quality early care and education services due to language and literacy barriers, lack of transportation, and poverty. Unlike most other home visiting models, ParentChild+’s one-on-one model intentionally targets families with children ages 16 months to 3 years so that they can support families as they navigate the transition into preschool. The program is intensive; it includes 92 home visits from an early learning specialist over the course of 46 weeks and involves the early learning specialist modeling reading, playing, and engaging in conversation to promote parent-child interaction and support the children’s development in all developmental domains.

The early learning specialist most often speaks the same language as the family and comes from the same community. In fact, 25 percent of the early learning specialists are former parent participants. Ensuring that there is a language and cultural match between the family and the early learning specialist is an important component of the one-on-one model. The only exception to this is if a new immigrant group moves into a community and the program does not yet have staff who speak the language. However, the recent shift to virtual visits caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has created a unique opportunity to connect families with early learning specialists who speak their language but may not live in their community. This language-based virtual approach is something that the organization is currently exploring.

The materials provided to the families are another important part of the intervention. Over the course of the 46 weeks, families receive books, educational toys, and written curricular guides with tips and ideas for supporting parent-child engagement between visits. The importance of maintaining a family’s home language is understood and emphasized; the books and written materials are provided in the family’s home language. While some parents want their child to speak English only before school and they ask the early learning specialist to speak English, the specialists work with the family to help them understand the mechanics of dual language development and the importance of preserving their home language. They talk to the families about the gift they are giving their child when they support bilingualism. ParentChild+ has compelling longitudinal data on the Spanish-speaking children in the program and how well they do with language and transitioning to English when they go to school, so this helps to convince parents – and some funders – of the importance of this approach.

#### ParentChild+ One-on-One Model as an ECE Workforce Pipeline Development Strategy

ParentChild+ is exploring ways to fund its core model as an early care and education workforce development strategy. Given the significant early educator shortage and the intensive training that parents have completed because of their participation in ParentChild+, leaders see the alumni parents as a potential pipeline for home-based child care and many parents are interested in exploring this career path. With funding from the Washington State Department of Commerce, the organization recently (spring 2021) conducted a survey of parents at all 18 ParentChild+ sites in Washington and found that 50 percent of the parents would be interested in learning more. At one site, which graduates 25 to 30 families a year, staff identified three families who moved into the family child care model and began to learn how to support children’s development in a group setting.

## Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning

<b>Project</b>	Ready Tots Program and HIPPY Home Visiting Program
<b>Population</b>	Immigrant and Refugee Families with Young Children
<b>Primary Language</b>	Various
<b>State</b>	Colorado
<b>Contact</b>	Paula Schrieffer, President & CEO

Home Visiting programs can be particularly effective for families from immigrant and refugee communities and/or who have limited English proficiency because they are often isolated and may not be connected to other services and supports. Families in these communities may not feel comfortable sending their children to center-based or school-based early childhood programs or simply do not have access to those programs. The [Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning in Denver, Colorado](#) serves primarily immigrant and refugee families. It has found that many families do not have access to transportation, so commuting for child care is not an option. In addition, for the immigrants and refugees that it serves, families with both school-age and younger children are discouraged by the public school system because they see their older children struggling and they do not want that experience for their younger children. These families are also disheartened by the lack of cultural and linguistic competence in the public schools and do not want their children to be made to feel unwelcome.

**“These are families who probably would not send their kids to any kind of center-based care – even to preschool. We don’t have transportation for preschool in the state of Colorado so that’s one major issue. Another is the families just not feeling comfortable sending their younger kids in school systems or centers when they know that their older children in the K-12 system are struggling.”**

**Paula Schrieffer, President and CEO**

The Spring Institute started its HIPPY home visiting program during the COVID-19 pandemic in the fall of 2020 with 26 families. The Spring Institute serves as a subcontractor providing home visiting services to families in their home languages of Korean, Burmese, and Somali. The home visitors themselves were recruited from the Spring Institute’s Ready Tots program that brings together parents and children and supports children’s social-emotional development while also providing parent education. The home visitors come from the community, speak the same language as the family, and share the same culture and practices, facilitating familiarity and trust with families from the start. They are trained by HIPPY USA and the primary contractor, Parent Possible. One of the reasons the HIPPY program model was chosen for this community was because Spring Institute felt that it was the most flexible evidence-based program in terms of who can be trained to provide the services. For many of the families, the person participating in the home visits is the family, friend, or neighbor (FFN) who cares for the child rather than the parents themselves. In this community, most of the families rely on one another for this informal child care. For example, there are 10 Burmese families living in the same apartment complex, and they will leave their

child with another family so that they can run errands or even leave them for longer with other families if they are going to their home country. Although they are not technically related to one another, they have created a community in which they function more like extended family than just neighbors.

When the pandemic hit, the HIPPY staff tried to shift the program to virtual visits, but the parents and caregivers were not interested or willing to do the home visits virtually. The program adapted by providing the visits outside. Since most of the families live in the same apartment complex, the home visitors were able to conduct their visits in the courtyard of the complex thereby keeping the program going during the pandemic.

## Hmong Early Childhood Coalition (HECC)

<b>Project</b>	Hmong FFN and Family Child Care Training Project
<b>Population</b>	Hmong FFN and Family Child Care Providers and Hmong Family Support Group
<b>Primary Language</b>	Hmong
<b>State</b>	Minnesota
<b>Contact</b>	Zang Vang-Lee, MA

The **Hmong Early Childhood Coalition (HECC)** is a community-based, volunteer-driven effort in the Twin Cities, Minnesota to support Hmong families with young children and the home-based child care providers who care for them. The HECC began in 2006 as a grassroots effort among a group of Hmong individuals to raise awareness of the needs of Hmong children and families and to connect families to resources and services in their community through an annual summit. The summit was developed to create awareness, educate, and empower the Hmong Community about the importance of school readiness, quality early care and education, developmental screening and early intervention, and advocacy on behalf of Hmong children. After eight years of pulling together the annual summit, members of the community started to ask, “What’s next?” They wanted to provide more opportunities for the families and the broader community, so they formed the HECC.

The organization has since evolved and focuses on sharing research and evidence-based practices, advocating for policy and systems change to benefit Hmong children, and connecting Hmong families to community services. HECC provides state-approved early childhood education trainings to Hmong family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) providers and parents. The HECC has reached out to nearly forty providers and over half of them come regularly to the trainings. The HECC has led efforts to develop curriculum and refine existing training content, to make sure that it is culturally sensitive to the Hmong community, by translating materials and including examples that are more relevant and meaningful in their culture. In addition to supplying training materials for FFN providers, the HECC is also supporting families and caregivers in the transition to kindergarten by developing curricula on the topic, including messages about the importance of transition supports and activities, and providing resources and help throughout the process. Parents regularly attend events and a support group for parents to come together and talk, share ideas, and support one another. This program—like so many of the Bright Spots—grew from the community’s needs and is led by community members. It continues to expand and adjust to the changing needs of the community.

“We are excited to be working with the same group of providers, but it is also growing. We have had a couple of Head Start teachers – and new folks are coming. The word it is getting out and people are reaching out to us more, so that is exciting!”

Zang Vang-Lee, Hmong Early Childhood Coalition

## New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Movement

<b>Project</b>	Native American Early Childhood Education and Care
<b>Population</b>	Native American New Mexican Children
<b>Primary Languages</b>	Jicarilla Apache, Keres, Mescalero Apache, Navajo, Tewa, Tiwa, Towa, Zuni
<b>State</b>	New Mexico
<b>Contact</b>	Jovanna Archuleta, Asst. Secretary for Native American Early Childhood Education and Care

In June 2020, the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) was officially launched to create a more cohesive, equitable, and effective early childhood system in New Mexico. Grounded in feedback and input from thousands of New Mexicans captured in the Birth-Five Needs Assessment and Native American Perspectives Report, the department appointed the nation’s first Assistant Secretary for Native American Early Childhood Education and Care, Jovanna Archuleta, whose focus is on strengthening the government-to-government relationships between New Mexico and its tribal communities regarding early childhood issues. While Assistant Secretary Archuleta has been in her role for just a short time, her focus has been on supporting multilingualism, multiculturalism, and social emotional wellbeing in young children – particularly in Native American communities. The department began a partnership with WIDA Early Years to develop a logic model and support strategic statewide planning to implement WIDA Early Years tools and resources. The department also partnered with Brazelton Touchpoints for a series of virtual gatherings with Native American early childhood educators to help re-envision what New Mexico’s early childhood system can do to ensure the social-emotional wellbeing of children, that culture and language survive and thrive, along with the many benefits of learning a heritage language. The hope is that these conversations will result in more investments in language immersion and revitalization of early childhood education programs.

Another innovative aspect of New Mexico’s ECECD departments’ policies is a wage supplement strategy for teachers and teacher assistants who work in a New Mexico state-licensed or registered child care program, Head Start or pre-K. The program is an education-based, tiered supplement with 10 levels, providing higher incentives for additional credits toward a degree. In addition, early childhood educators may also be eligible to receive a one-time incentive payment of \$1,500 if they are certified bilingual.<sup>10</sup>

New Mexico’s ECECD has many innovative programs on which to build. The New Mexico Immigrant Law Center, for example, provides legal services but also advocates. In partnership with a coalition of other immigrant serving organizations, it advocates to remove barriers on professional and occupational licensure and access to work authorization and COVID-19 relief funding regardless of immigration status, which has an enormous impact on adults whose primary language is not English and their young children who are emerging bilingual learners.

<sup>10</sup> A brief discussion of this one-time incentive is included in Elizabeth Grongisky’s remarks on the video [Overview of New Mexico’s Compensation Strategies](#), BUILD Initiative, 2022.

## ParentChild+

<b>Project</b>	Family Child Care Model
<b>Population</b>	Licensed Family Child Care and Family, Friend, and Neighbor Providers
<b>Primary Language</b>	Various
<b>State</b>	Headquarters in Massachusetts
<b>Contact</b>	Sarah Walzer, JD, CEO, ParentChild+

The ParentChild+ Family Child Care Model emerged through two paths. Early childhood specialists working in the ParentChild+ core model providing home visits would find that the parent was caring for other children in their home (i.e., the parent was also a home-based child care provider). The second impetus emerged from parents who raised concerns about the care being provided to their in a family child care setting. In a sense, these parents had learned so much from their own involvement with the ParentChild+ program that they started to see more clearly what was missing in their child care provider's home. As ParentChild+ sought to address this client-raised issue, it became clear that family child care and family, friend, and neighbor care are largely overlooked or underserved by existing quality improvement initiatives. The existing professional development opportunities for home-based child care providers are designed primarily based on the center-based care model.



We do not have enough 0-3 care in this country and unless we let people who are good at this work provide that care, we're going to have even less care available to enable women to go back to work.

Sara Walzer, CEO, ParentChild+

The ParentChild+ Family Child Care Model was first piloted in Massachusetts and New York and has now expanded to seven states, each with a different scale and scope. The program has been rolled out in sites that were already implementing their core one-on-one model with families because they were already steeped in the ParentChild+ model and approach. The model works in a wide variety of family child care environments. Some programs work exclusively with licensed family child care providers whereas others work with family, friend, and neighbor providers.

The Family Child Care Model also involves an early learning specialist who comes to the home bringing books, toys, and resources; modelling provider-child interactions; and providing feedback to the parent-provider. Unlike early childhood educators in center-based settings, these educators do not have the benefit of co-workers or supervisors to bounce ideas off or to ask for feedback. The early learning specialist fills that gap for these providers. This opportunity allows them to access individualized professional development tailored to their setting, provided in the language they are most comfortable speaking, and provides them with books, toys, and other resources they can use with the children.

The ParentChild+ Family Child Care Model research is promising. It has demonstrated changes in family child care providers' practices and parents reported observing changes in their children's learning and engagement because of their provider's participation. Parents themselves have also become more engaged with their children's learning; the children bring home books and ask their parents to read to them – something that they would not have done prior to the program.

## Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College

<b>Project</b>	Gookonaanig Endaawaad (Grandmas' House)
<b>Population</b>	Indigenous Ojibwe Emerging Language Learners
<b>Primary Language</b>	Ojibwe
<b>State</b>	Minnesota
<b>Contact</b>	Adikoons Hayley Olson, Coordinator of Parent and Adult programs

Nowhere is the importance of supporting children’s home language more critical than in the Indigenous and Native American communities where generations of racist policies and cultural suppression have put their native languages at risk of extinction. Language revitalization efforts not only help to protect and preserve these languages, but they empower Native American communities to ensure the survival of their culture. There are different language revitalization strategies that focus on language immersion in some way and often involve intergenerational approaches that connect elders within a tribe with language learners.

One example of this approach is the work of the Ojibwemotaadidaa Omaa Gidakiiminaang (OOG) (also known as Ojibwe Immersion Academy) in north-eastern Minnesota that is working to ensure the longevity of the Ojibwe language. In 2020, OOG established a “language nest”<sup>11</sup> for children 0-5 years old, called Gookonaanig Endaawaad (Grandmas' House). This program is trigenerational and brings together young children who are emerging bilingual learners, their parents, and the tribal elders, to raise first language speakers and revitalize the Ojibwe language. It grew out of a long-standing Ojibwe immersion program that OOG ran for young adult second language learners who are English speaking but want to learn Ojibwe. As the students from that program began to have their own children, they wanted to raise their children knowing the Ojibwe language. While many of the adults are proficient now, they are not first language speakers.

The first step in developing the Gookonaanig Endaawaad tri-generational language nest was to meet with the elders in the community, hold a ceremony, and brainstorm ideas for how they can have young first language speakers again. The only first language speakers are now elders and the youngest of the elders are in their sixties. The language nest was developed to connect infants and toddlers with elders, so they are learning lessons from them while also learning the language. The parents and the caregivers are also there, learning from the elders as well.

**“We want to create this environment of just being at home like you are with your grandparents and you're just living life and you're cooking meals, you're chatting, you're beading, you're sewing, you're going out and you're setting the trap lines or you're snowmobiling, and that environment, and you just have the little ones around. Maybe they're**

<sup>11</sup> A languages nest is an approach to language revitalization and preservation that originated in New Zealand to preserve the Māori language and is an intergenerational immersion approach in which the older native speakers take part in the early education of children, so the children are immersed in the first language from an early age.

young enough they're sitting in their cradle boards. Or maybe they're just walking with you. They're following you on the trail, they're checking the traps with you. They're there, they're listening to the language that's happening. Just being incorporated in life. And that's really, for us and where we come from, that's where the language happens.”

Adikoons Hayley Olson, Coordinator of Parent and Adult Programs, Ojibwemotaadidaa Omaa Gidakiiminaang

The Ojibwemotaadidaa Omaa Gidakiiminaang program emphasizes that the elders are the teachers and their people’s knowledge carriers. The elders are paid for the time they spend in the program, sharing their knowledge and their language because they are valued more than a licensed educator. The program is designed to be in-person three days a week, and full day. However, because it began in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the program’s ability to be in person. Like many programs, OOG had to adjust and adapt. Program leaders were able to get the elder speakers the technology and training to get them online and to participate in Zoom meetings with the families. However, since the online format was not appropriate to engage the babies, the program evolved into the elders coaching the parents about what they could take home and do and the language that they needed. Another adaptation of the program was the curriculum kits that were developed with the elders and early childhood education specialists, and other resources to make sure that the content addressed developmentally appropriate milestones. The kits were then sent home to the families and are available on the program’s website for families to access.

## Centro Tyrone Guzman

<b>Project</b>	Siembra Montessori Preschool and Mi Pequeño Mundo Home Visiting
<b>Population</b>	Spanish-speaking Latine Families with Children who are Emerging Bilingual Learners
<b>Primary Language</b>	Spanish
<b>State</b>	Minnesota
<b>Contact</b>	Roxana Linares, Executive Director

**Centro Tyrone Guzman** in Minneapolis, Minnesota was founded by Chicano activists and faculty at the University of Minnesota and was called Centro Cultural Chicano; most of the population served were from Mexico. As the demographics of the community began to shift, more immigrants from other parts of South America, particularly Ecuador, moved into the community. Initially, the immigrants did not seek the help of the Centro Cultural Chicano. Tyrone Guzman, the director at the time, began to hire Ecuadorian staff and dropped “Chicano” from the name so that the Ecuadorian community would feel welcome. In 2009, when Tyrone Guzman passed away, the Center was renamed Centro Tyrone Guzman, in his honor.

“All of that trust – in that the community has the answers and can guide us and that we want to work together – is what creates an environment where we really are providing to them what is needed and not what we think is needed.”

Roxana Linares, Executive Director, Centro Tyrone Guzman

The responsiveness to the community and its needs is a legacy that continues today. Through extensive partnerships and funding, Centro Tyrone Guzman provides families with economic assistance as well as help with basic needs like rent, utilities, and food. The Center’s philosophy is that when the whole family is supported and the Center can reduce family stress, the children will be better able to learn. Early care and education services have always been part of the services offered at Centro Tyrone Guzman, and its [Montessori preschool](#) is a model program. The families served are primarily Latine families of low income and all the staff are bilingual and bicultural. The families have significant needs and many stressors in their lives, but the preschool serves as a peaceful haven for them.

“It is so horrible that some kids come from populations who are told that they shouldn’t be here, that they don’t belong, that who they are is wrong and we want to break that by surrounding the kids with pride in their culture, with Spanish language, with Spanish role models, and telling them every day that what they speak, who their parents are is ‘great’ and ‘amazing’.”

Roxana Linares, Executive Director, Centro Tyrone Guzman

The staff at Centro Tyrone Guzman invest a lot of time and energy in developing an understanding of the needs of their community before they start to develop a new idea or program. For example, when they heard from the families they serve in their Montessori preschool program that the parents wanted a place for their infants and toddlers, the staff conducted a series of listening sessions. They formed a parent advisory council, conducted focus groups, and determined that rather than starting an infant/toddler program, what the mothers really needed was a home visiting program. In addition to the focus groups and advisory council, staff also met with fathers to understand how they perceived their role in the family and to make sure that a home visiting approach would be well received. They collaborated with parent leaders and community partners to develop their own curriculum, called Mi Pequeño Mundo (My Little World). The program is a culturally affirming, Montessori-based home visiting program that hires and trains “connectors” (promotoras) from the community who collaborate with parents and provide them with supports from the beginning of children’s lives. The funding is provided through a grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the curriculum was developed in partnership with the University of Minnesota. The connectors are trained in the Montessori philosophy as well as in nutrition, breastfeeding, and how to connect families with resources in the community. While a formal evaluation of the program is in development, the feedback from the community has been overwhelmingly positive.



## West African Community Council of Seattle

<b>Project</b>	West African Family Preschool and ParentChild+ Home Visiting Program
<b>Population</b>	West African Refugee and Immigrant Families
<b>Primary Language</b>	French, Arabic, Soninke, Mandinka, Wolof, Fulani, Moore, and Bambara
<b>State</b>	Washington
<b>Contact</b>	Aicha Parkouda, Early Learning Director

Like the Spring Institute, the [West African Community Council \(WACC\) of Seattle](#) serves low-income, limited English-speaking immigrants with young children. WACC provides a home visiting program and a full-day preschool program for three- and four-year-old children. Most of the families served through the program are from West Africa and multiple languages are spoken by the families including French, Arabic, Soninke, Mandinka, Wolof, Fulani, Moore, and Bambara. The home visiting staff are recruited from the same community, trained, and initially shadowed by more experienced home visitors, and they participate in weekly reflective sessions. WACC uses the ParentChild+ model for the home visiting services and adapts the examples, videos, and other materials so that they are culturally and linguistically relevant to the families. Another way in which WACC supports families in promoting their children’s dual language development is by encouraging parents to talk with their children in their home language. While they may not have books or other materials in their home language, the parents are encouraged to use the pictures in books written in English but to discuss them in their home language.

WACC of Seattle found that when COVID forced it to switch to virtual home visits, the primarily African community it serves responded incredibly well once the families had the technology, were trained, and got used to the process. In May 2021, WACC surveyed families to see how many of them wanted to shift back to in-person home visits; ninety-nine percent of the respondents said that they want to stay with virtual visits. What WACC came to learn is that for these families, having someone come into their home creates added work and stress because they feel that they must be good “hosts.” The virtual meetings are more flexible, easier to fit into their busy schedules, and do not require them to travel or prepare their home for a visitor. In fact, while WACC initially struggled to get the program fully enrolled, once the switch to virtual home visits was made, there was a waiting list.

**“It was a long process. It was hard. But in the end, we were so proud. It is actually working better for us now. For some people, privacy is very important. Culturally, they don’t want people in their home twice a week.”**

**Aicha Parkouda, Early Learning Director, WACC of Seattle**

The WACC preschool program in Seattle conducts a dual language survey with parents before any formal child assessments are done. This survey is designed to understand the child’s language exposure and abilities. Staff members feel that this informal assessment is often more helpful than the formal ASQ assessment. One challenge that the WACC staff encountered was that the West African parents they serve feel an obligation to say that their children can do things even if they cannot yet. If they had not used the informal survey in

addition to the ASQ, they may not have uncovered this issue. To address it, they created videos about the ASQ in different languages so that parents understood the importance of not presenting the child as capable or having strengths that they may not yet have on the assessment and that it is a tool to help their children, rather than to judge them.

Another challenge is hiring teaching staff who are culturally and linguistically competent and educated whose degrees are from various West Africa countries, ethnicities, and linguistic groups. WACC hires these individuals, and they are effective and well-liked by the families and the children. But due to state funding restrictions, they are not permitted to be lead teachers because they do not have a bachelor's degree from an institution of higher education accredited by the US Department of Education.<sup>12</sup>

**“This is a huge barrier for these women who know the community, know the parents, and have been doing the job full time. They are also taking care of their family, and then trying to go back to school. Not many people can do all of that. Most of them give up.”**

Aicha Parkouda, Early Learning Director, WACC of Seattle

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<sup>12</sup> There are a number of organizations in the US that review and evaluate foreign credentials. The National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) maintains a list of NACES member organizations (<https://www.naces.org/members>).

## Cultivate Learning at the University of Washington

<b>Project</b>	Circle Time Magazine
<b>Population</b>	Early Educators and Parents
<b>Primary Language</b>	Somali
<b>State</b>	Washington
<b>Contact</b>	Dawn Williams, PhD, Director of Professional Development and Coaching

Cultivate Learning at the University of Washington is an organization devoted to bridging the gap between research and practice to provide guidance and expertise to parents and providers on a range of early learning topics and issues. A key focus of Cultivate Learning is to develop and provide culturally responsive professional development for early childhood educators and parents. It offers a range of professional learning opportunities and supports from training and coaching to a web series and Circle Time Magazine, a professional development program for early childhood teachers done in a talk show format rather than a lecture or typical training format. The talk show hosts discuss topics related to the work that early childhood educators do every day and feature guests and experts sharing tips, tools, and real-life examples that teachers can use in their work day to day. At the BUILD Initiative conference in 2021, staff from Cultivate Learning shared some of their lessons learned while working to create the Circle Time Magazine in other languages, which underscored the complexity of the work. The program was originally provided in English and then it was successfully translated into Spanish. However, as the Cultivate Learning staff translated it into other languages, they realized that a direct translation approach will not always work. That was the case when they tried to create the Circle Time Magazine for the Somali-speaking population.

The Somali language is a phonetic language so it is read as it sounds and may sound different depending on the region. Because of the different dialects, the words chosen must be inclusive so that anyone who speaks Somali will understand. Another issue is that some of the concepts and the terminology used in Circle Time Magazine episodes could not directly translate to Somali—like “behavior support.” The direct translation of “behavior support” would not make sense in Somali so additional context and explanation was needed. Thus, the Somali-speaking staff at Cultivate Learning spent a lot of time developing additional content that would make sense to the Somali community. One example of content that needed to be adapted to the Somali community was a scenario in which the teacher read a book to a child to calm the child down. In the Somali culture, reading books aloud together is not a common activity but oral storytelling is common and is often filled with metaphors and deep meaning. So, they made sure to use examples of storytelling but also found books in Somali to share and explained the content in diverse ways so that it was relevant and relatable to the Somalian community.

Another important adaptation of the Circle Time Magazine was making sure that the Somali culture was honored and highlighted in different ways throughout the curriculum. For example, there was an English episode that discussed the benefits of yoga for children and teachers as a strategy to calm down. But in Somali culture, yoga is not well known or done often. However, the Somali staff who were developing the content recognized that many Somali families pray five times a day and that the movements and meditative

aspect of prayer is like some of the movements and the calming effect that yoga can have. They were able to connect the concepts of yoga, prayer, movement, and the calming effect these can have but in a way that made sense within the Somali culture.

Recognizing the importance of learning about other cultures and how many early care and education providers may not be Somali but may have Somali families in their program, the Cultivate Learning staff decided to add English subtitles to the Somali-language episodes.

“And it is important as an educator and as adult, as a role model for children, to show that learning about different cultures is a good thing. It’s not something that is...hard to do as long as you have someone around you, or you are able to have these resources to go look for those resources so that you can break those biases that can occur from a lack of education or just a lack of proximity to people of a different culture. And so that’s one of the reasons why we were so excited to really make this entire season with English captions, because it’s so beneficial for all educators to really get this information and use this as a resource, whether you have children who are Somali or you don’t, it’s really important.”

Samira Mohamud, Professional Development Specialist

## Early Edge California

<b>Project</b>	Multilingual Learning Online Toolkit
<b>Population</b>	Early Educators, Program Administrators, and Teacher Education Faculty
<b>Primary Language</b>	Various
<b>State</b>	California
<b>Contact</b>	Carolyn Crolette, MA, Director of Dual Language Learner (DLL) Programs

Early Edge California and partners recently launched [The Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#) as an online tool for early educators, program administrators, and higher education faculty in teacher preparation programs. The toolkit is a curated selection of resources and best practices and includes a Starter Guide that outlines the foundational principles for best practices when working with bilingual and multilingual learners. The strategies and resources are organized into eleven instructional topic areas that are essential for those who are supporting the development of emerging language learners and multilingual learners:

1. Family Engagement
2. Social-emotional Health and Development
3. Classroom Environment
4. Oral Language Development
5. Literacy Development
6. Bilingual Classrooms
7. Home Language Development
8. Additional English Language Development Strategies
9. Content Learning
10. Assessment
11. Building Educators' Capacity

Each of the instructional strategy areas includes a wide selection of resources including videos, handouts, strategies and actions, and other tools.

## Great Start to Quality Resource Center

<b>Project</b>	Great Start to Quality Training for License-Exempt Providers
<b>Population</b>	License-Exempt Providers Serving Migrant Families
<b>Primary Language</b>	Spanish
<b>State</b>	Michigan
<b>Contact</b>	Isabel Blair, Bilingual Family Child Care Provider and Trainer

In Michigan, training and individualized supports are provided to early care and education providers receiving subsidy through the Great Start to Quality Resource Centers. In some parts of the state, there is a significant migrant population and specialized outreach, and resources are provided to the family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) caregivers who commonly serve these families. The license-exempt providers that serve the migrant community in Michigan are unique in the challenges they face. Many of these providers live in Mexico or Texas but come to Michigan when the seasonal workers are there to provide care. Since license-exempt providers, who are unrelated to the children they serve, can only provide care in the child's home in Michigan, the state recognizes the entire Agricultural Labor Camp (or migrant camp) as the child's own home. In these circumstances, educators often provide care in a mobile home on the migrant camp, and they must pay rent to the camp owner. In some cases, there is a permanent house at the migrant camp that is devoted to child care. Sometimes providers are forced to move to a different location to serve the camp. If that happens, they must start the licensing process all over, which can become costly and burdensome for them, and they need extra support to navigate the system. The FFN providers in the migrant community are primarily Spanish speaking so language becomes an issue for them as well when they are trying to maneuver through the licensing system.

The Great Start to Quality orientation typically provides the first contact with the license exempt FFN providers. The orientations are offered in Spanish by a native Spanish speaker who is also a licensed family child care provider, and she finds ways to create a comfortable and familiar atmosphere – always with food served family style – so that the providers feel at home. The trainers also intentionally partner with the Department of Health and Human Services social workers who are known and trusted in the community and can provide additional information and resources for the providers. While the trainings are designed for subsidized, legally licensed-exempt FFN caregivers, the training and support is also open to FFN providers who are caring for children “under the radar.” Unfortunately, many of the FFN providers in the migrant community are scared away from becoming legally license-exempt and receiving subsidy because of the additional requirements (e.g., social security number and fingerprints). The license-exempt providers serving the migrant community tend to go “above and beyond” for the children that they care for, making them homemade meals and establishing the strong social-emotional bonds that are the foundation for later learning. The stress on school readiness has over-emphasized academic skills and placed less value on play-based and social-emotional learning and the importance of adult-child relationships. Another challenge that these families face when they get to the K-12 school system is that their home language is not valued, and maintenance of the home language is not supported. Families are then inclined to push their children to only learn English to fit in and succeed.

## Latinas Unidas Por Los Niños y Niñas de America (LUNA)

<b>Project</b>	CampusLUNA
<b>Population</b>	FFN and FCCH Providers
<b>Primary Language</b>	Spanish
<b>State</b>	Maryland
<b>Contact</b>	Pilar Torres, EdD, Co-Founder and President

Latinas Unidas Por Los Niños y Niñas de America (LUNA) is an organization that began in Maryland and offers a series of free Spanish-language resources and activities including webinars, blogs/vlogs, videos, and a virtual learning community that meets regularly. LUNA is also an advocacy organization whose vision is to be the most recognized Spanish-language platform in the US and Latin America that supports early childhood education, with a particular focus on family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) and family child care home (FCCH) providers. Central to LUNA’s strategy is the use of technology to reduce barriers and promote equitable access to professional and business development for home-based child care providers, recognizing that smartphones are a technology that Latine FFN and FCCH provider use. One of the key concepts of LUNA’s approach is that to move Latine home-based child care providers into the mainstream licensed early care and education system, there must be “little ladders into the formal ECE system.”

**“‘Child Care Deserts’ is a misleading term – it tells a false narrative. We know that someone is taking care of those children. There is a huge undercount in terms of supply because Latina FFN providers are not acknowledged as part of the system.”**

**Pilar Torres, Co-Founder and President, LUNA**

LUNA’s CampusLUNA, currently in development, will be an online, Spanish-language professional development cohort model that focuses initially on the CCDF-required training topics for license-exempt providers receiving CCDF subsidies and then supports them on the steps involved in entering the formal system, such as obtaining a license, QRIS, and setting design, and eventually in obtaining an online Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. The model is also being designed to be scalable and replicable and to coordinate and strengthen existing systems, so that there is a clear pathway for providers into the formal early care and education system. The approach will include relational coaching and will be tailored to the specific needs of the provider as well as the existing resources available in the providers’ states/regions. LUNA recognizes that it will be important to build on the existing resources available in states but that those resources are often scattered and difficult to access, so its role will be to support communities to organize the resources into one coherent system.

## Women’s Housing and Economic Development Corporation

<b>Project</b>	Home-Based Childcare Network and Training Institute
<b>Population</b>	Family, Friend, and Neighbor Providers
<b>Primary Language</b>	Spanish
<b>State</b>	New York
<b>Contact</b>	Diana Perez, M.A., VP Home-based Child Care services

The Women’s Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco) is a multiservice non-profit organization in Bronx, NY that provides family support services as well as child care supports, training, and home visits to both English- and Spanish-speaking family, friend, and neighbor providers. Approximately 60 percent of the providers WHEDco works with are Spanish speaking. While the state contracts with WHEDco to determine eligibility of license-exempt providers, WHEDco provides supports to meet health and safety standards and to assist the providers in securing subsidy funding. The staff must walk the line between monitoring and support, yet their commitment is to ensuring that providers are able to get the training and support they need to receive an increase in their subsidy rate. WHEDco sees itself as in partnership with the providers. The WHEDco staff are all from and represent the local community; they are struggling with many of the same challenges that the providers experience.

[WHEDco’s Home-Based Childcare Network and Training Institute](#) provides professional development and training opportunities, regular monitoring and visits, technical assistance and support, business support, and support with filing payment and reimbursement claims. WHEDco recognizes the importance of building a relationship with providers and encourages them to learn more, recognize themselves as professionals, and feel proud of the work they do.

“We encourage the provider to learn a little bit more about what they’ve been doing – feel that they are not ‘just babysitters’ but they are early care educators and they have a really meaningful role in the life of that particular child that they are serving, whether that be a relative child or a neighbor’s child...let us work with you to give the best of you to this child.”

Diana Perez, WHEDco

The Home-Based Childcare Network and Training Institute WHEDco operates can be considered a staffed family child care network, which is an emerging workforce support strategy for addressing home-based child care retention, recruitment, and compensation. Staffed family child care networks can be funded with CCDF quality set aside and other flexible dollars. And networks are named as an allowable child care supply-building strategy in the ARP Act guidelines.

## La Red

<b>Project</b>	La Red Latina de Educación Temprana
<b>Population</b>	Latine Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) Providers
<b>Primary Language</b>	Spanish
<b>State</b>	Minnesota
<b>Contact</b>	Ruth Evangelista, M.A., and Faviola Estrada, Co-Founders

**La Red** is a community-based organization that provides support, tools, training, and leadership development for Latine child care providers in Minnesota to deliver quality child care and support the health of their families and community. The program began with one family approaching the founder, asking about the rules in Minnesota related to providing child care to family, friends, and neighbors. This led to a deeper understanding of the inequalities in Latine immigrant access to quality child care and the lack of supports and resources for family, friend, and neighbor providers, the type of care chosen most often by these families. La Red found the space, brought the FFN providers together, and obtained grant funding to focus on nutrition, healthy eating, and physical exercise. The program began with a group of fewer than twenty providers and now is serving 350 providers with a range of supports that are community driven.

La Red now organizes trainings on a variety of subjects: early childhood development, health and safety, nutrition, literacy, and support for children with special needs. The content is driven by the community's own definition of quality early care and education which puts a high priority on maintaining the values of its culture while ensuring that providers understand the best ways to interact with children, provide them with nutritious meals and physical activity, and support their social and emotional development. La Red also brings together FFN providers so they can connect and support each other, build community, and increase social cohesion. When providers are brought together in a network, they can advocate for policies and community-based solutions to better support the families in their community. Like the Hmong Early Childhood Coalition's work with home-based child care providers, the model is developed by the community, the participants, and the providers. La Red leverages the rich culture and experiences of those in the community so they will learn and grow but not lose sight of the cultural roots. The community leads the process by reaching out to other organizations to support their work.

**"La Red is a program for regular people – the aunts, grandparents – this program is running for the community, for the people."**

**Ruth Evangelista, La Red Co-Founder**

When the pandemic hit the community, La Red pivoted from exclusively focusing on FFN providers to helping the most vulnerable residents in the community. Through partnerships, La Red has coordinated and distributed food and provided COVID testing and vaccination, demonstrating the level of trust and integration the organization has been able to achieve in its community.

## Montgomery College

<b>Project</b>	Early Childhood Education Programs
<b>Population</b>	Early Childhood Educators and College Students
<b>Primary Language</b>	Spanish
<b>State</b>	Maryland
<b>Contact</b>	Sonia Pruneda-Hernandez, EdD, Chair, Early Childhood Education Programs

Over the course of several years, the Early Childhood Education Program at Montgomery College, in Maryland, went from graduating under 10 students to over 60 students per year. The program's chair recognized that there were significant numbers of family child care providers and family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) providers coming to the college, but that they were coming through the non-credit professional development program. She began to focus on this population and its unique needs to support the providers in getting college credits and increasing their earning potential.

Montgomery College serves a diverse community, and the college is recognized as an Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). Most of the family child care and FFN providers accessing the non-credit professional development were not fluent in English, so the program created a combined Child Development Associate (CDA) and English as a Second Language (ESL) program. The goal of this program is to ensure that these providers are fluent in English so that they can progress professionally and not be stuck in low-paying positions due to their lack of English fluency.

Several aspects of the Early Childhood Education Program at Montgomery College have helped to increase graduation rates and support the providers continue their education and increase their qualifications:

- Online program – Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Montgomery College Early Childhood Education Program identified the need to shift to virtual learning for its students. Both their credit and non-credit programs are fully online. In fact, its program served as a model for the rest of the college when the pandemic hit.
- Free tuition – Through state and federal funding as well as private grants, the program currently has 120 students on full scholarship. One aspect that has been particularly challenging is that the state and federal scholarships and financial aid require that the recipient have a social security number, and many of the Montgomery College students do not. To address this gap, the college has approached the philanthropic community requesting funding to support these students.
- Clearly articulated pathways – The program offers a wide range of courses, certifications, and degree options, including courses that make up the 90-hour training required by the state as well as those needed for the 45 hours in either infant/toddler development or school-age child care. All the college credit courses may be applied toward the 120 hours required for the Child Development Associate (CDA) national credentials. Those learning English can complete the required ESL courses simultaneously. The next step in the pathway is the one-year Early Childhood Certificate, which is designed to prepare students to work in a variety of settings with

children birth through age eight. Students who complete the 90 hours and the 45 hours can apply their course credit toward the certificate, and they can also apply these credits toward the next step in the pathway – the associate degree in early childhood education. Lastly, Montgomery College worked with local universities on articulation agreements to ensure that students can transfer to a four-year program and have their credits applied toward the bachelor’s degree. In addition to articulating these pathways, it was critical to make sure that all faculty, advisors, and 36 counsellors understood the pathways and could help provide guidance to the students.

- Bilingual adjunct faculty from the field – Another critical component of the program’s success is its adjunct faculty. The college allowed the program to hire bilingual alumni who had gone through the full pathway – from the ESL+CDA program to the BA and finally to obtaining their master’s degrees. These adjunct faculty are still in the field running their own family child care homes, so they understand the struggles their students are experiencing, know the community, speak the language, and serve as role models for the students to show them that it is possible to further their education.
- Dedicated college advisor – The program has one dedicated advisor just for the early childhood child care students, to help them identify the pathway that is the right fit for them and to help them navigate the system.
- Student Success Hub – What started as a student club has now become a social network and support system of over 120 active members who convene monthly. The hub has two paid advisors and provides general support to students as well as skill development and support on specific topics such as resume writing and career planning.
- Workforce Advisory Council – To ensure that the program is aligned with the field and meeting the diverse needs of the students it serves, the program leadership established a Workforce Advisory Council made up of representatives from the CDA Council, the Family Child Care Association, Maryland State Child Care Association, Latino Child Care Association, as well as student representatives. The Council meets quarterly, hosts job fairs for child care providers and an annual statewide conference that is subsidized and offered at a low cost to participants.

When asked what the most important key to the success of the program was, the program chair said that having support from the college dean who valued early education was essential, as was her own perseverance; she advocated relentlessly for the program – sometimes having to be the “squeaky wheel” to make sure that her staff and students were getting all the resources they needed.

“It’s taken a long time – we’ve been working on this a long time. It looks really successful now that we’ve put it all together. There was a lot of work...you have to be persistent. They’ve told me that I’m – I push things. You know? But I’m seeing other departments get things so I was like, ‘Why can’t our early childhood students get this?’”

Sonia Pruneda-Hernandez, Chair Early Childhood Education Programs

## Empowering Communities Globally and Lutheran Family Services

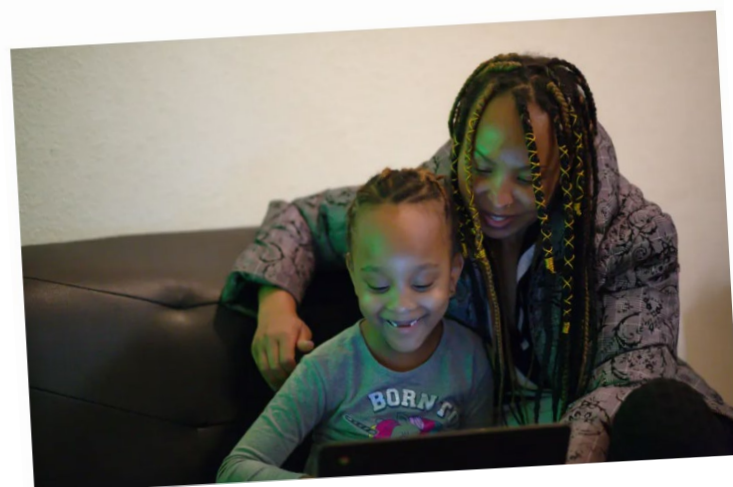
<b>Project</b>	The Pamoja Early Childhood Education Workforce Project
<b>Population</b>	Non-English/Non-Spanish-speaking Immigrants and Refugees
<b>Primary Languages</b>	Swahili, Arabic, Farsi, and Karen
<b>State</b>	Colorado
<b>Contact</b>	Deborah Young, PhD, Executive Director

The **Pamoja Early Childhood Education Workforce Project** is an initiative in Colorado aimed at increasing the number of early childhood educators who are fluent in multiple languages and who can meet the growing need for early educators to care for young emerging bilingual learners, particularly those from immigrant and refugee families. The Pamoja project trains cohorts of women in early childhood education in multiple languages including Swahili, Arabic, Farsi (Persian), and Karen (spoken by refugees from Burma and Thailand) and creates a pathway to higher education. Deborah Young, the visionary behind the Pamoja Project, has experience working all over the world in areas of conflict and war (including having built the first early childhood center in Nicaragua during the Iran-Contra affair) and has focused on empowering communities through the support of children and early educators. Trained in the Montessori approach, Young's organization, Empowering Communities Globally, is grounded in the idea that we can change the world in one generation if we raise our children differently. Young partnered with Lutheran Family Services (LFS) Rocky Mountains to connect with immigrant refugee families and ensure that the women in the project are connected to the multiple layers of support offered by LFS.

Like many of the efforts highlighted in this report, an integral part of the Pamoja Project's design is listening and being informed by the intended program beneficiaries. The Project includes regularly scheduled listening sessions, focus groups, and key informant interviews with members of the community to identify barriers and needs and to formulate solutions together. Through those meetings with the community, LFS learned that over 95 percent of the FFN providers were interested in attending college. One of the initial aspects of the program that did not work as well as LFS had hoped was supporting providers in obtaining their Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate. Unfortunately, a requirement of that program was that the women had to achieve a level of fluency in English in order take the program.

Recognizing that there had to be a better way, the Pamoja Project approached Front Range Community College and has been able to create a pathway for the non-English, non-Spanish speaking immigrant and refugee women. Deborah Young serves as an adjunct faculty member in the Early Education Department at Front Range Community College.

**Refugee And Immigrant Women Show Promise As A Pipeline For New Colorado Early Childhood Educators**  
By Jenny Brundin | January 12, 2021



While many of the classes are provided in English with a translator and cultural liaison available, some of the classes are offered in the women's home language. The materials are also provided in their home language, and they are connected to a mentor who speaks their language and can help them in the program and see their pathway to a career in early care and education. Over ninety individuals a year now go through this program. More demand exists than they can meet with the small amount of funding and staff currently available.

Pamoja has received a new grant to work with licensed early childhood education centers that want to diversify their staff and hire non-English and non-Spanish speaking educators. To be a part of the network, the centers must agree to receive monthly training, and all staff from the director to the custodians must participate in the training so that they create a culture that truly embraces multiculturalism and multilingualism. The centers also must agree that anyone they hire gets to speak their first language in the classroom.

Integral to the work of the Pamoja Project is ongoing, participatory evaluation and listening to continually improve and adapt its services to the community. One of the biggest barriers for the women in the project and for immigrant and refugees all over the country is the systemic bias and discrimination within institutes of higher education. The system is linguistically biased towards English, thereby limiting access for most immigrants and refugees. Although progress has been made in terms of supports and access for Spanish-speaking populations, even those supports fall woefully short of need. Many of the immigrant and refugee women that the Pamoja Project works with have been turned away from the higher education system because they are told that their English needs to improve before they come to college. The Pamoja Project is working to disrupt this prejudice and discrimination within the higher education system.

**"We need accomplices...people within the system who are willing to get in trouble and break the rules in order to do the right thing. I call us the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion or "JEDI warriors" of Pamoja."**

**Deborah Young, Adjunct Faculty, Early Education Department, Front Range Community College**

The solution, according to Young, must be holistic. All aspects of the higher education system must be working in tandem to support immigrant and refugee students. For example, financial aid is a major barrier for the women with whom she works. The people in the immigrant and refugee community do not have the money to pay for school but they also do not qualify for many of federal grants, so their only option is to take out student loans. For Muslims, taking out loans violates their religious beliefs, yet for so many it is the only way to pay for an education in the United States.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> In Islam there is a concept called "Riba" which refers to interest charged on loans or deposits and is prohibited under Shari'ah law. It is meant to ensure that there is equity in the exchange. (From <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/r/riba.asp>)

## Fresno Unified School District

<b>Project</b>	Language Learning Project Toolkit and GEMS
<b>Population</b>	Early Childhood Education Practitioners Working with Emerging Bilingual Learners
<b>Primary Language</b>	Various
<b>State</b>	California
<b>Contact</b>	Carola Oliva-Olson, PhD

The [Language Learning Project \(LLP\) Toolkit](#) is a tool for early childhood education practitioners and communities to support the development and learning of emerging bilingual learners. It is based on the Language Learning Project model that was originally designed by a group of early care and education providers from multiple agencies in Fresno, California, and convened by the Fresno Unified School District. The toolkit is a collection of resources and tools that can be used and adapted by other communities to develop a strategy to support the lifelong learning of emerging bilingual learners. The Toolkit includes a summary of the most recent research on the science of Dual Language Learning and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) as well as an overview of Personalized Oral Language Learning (POLL) Strategies and how they connect and align with DAP. The LLP toolkit includes all the materials and content for the professional development sessions as well as the tools and templates used to support coaching.

The LLP toolkit includes a self-reflection tool called Dual Language Learner Supports for Early Learning Settings, developed by Carola Oliva-Olson, Linda M. Espinosa, Marlene Zepeda, Veronica Fernandez, and Anna Aramula-Gonzales. The tool, designed for all early childhood educators, including those who are monolingual speakers, focuses on the unique teaching practices needed to fully support each child who is an emerging bilingual learner. The tool can be used to assess where a program is in the process of developing a comprehensive set of supports and skills in five areas that are critical to the optimal development of emerging bilingual learners:

1. Family Supports
2. Environmental Supports
3. Instructional Supports
4. Effective Oral Language Interactions
5. Assessment of Language Development

Carola Oliva-Olson, one of the key authors and experts who developed the LLP, is in the process of developing another tool called Guaranteeing Equity for Multilingual Learners in Early Childhood Settings (GEMS) that focuses on program level. This tool will examine how prepared the leaders and the programs themselves are, within both the classroom and in homes, to serve children and families who are multilingual learners. The goal is to validate the GEMS tool (e.g., statistically test that it is measuring what it is designed to measure) so that it can be used as a measure of quality for emerging bilingual learners and eventually be used in QRIS.

## Quality Standards and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

### Alaska Learn and Grow

[Learn and Grow](#) is Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System. For many years, Alaska has paid attention to issues of language and culture in the development of its early learning system. Its early learning standards were among the first<sup>14</sup> to address cultural and linguistic diversity and it has culturally relevant [early childhood core knowledge and competencies](#) as well as quality standards related to culture and diversity. In its latest revision, programs can obtain rating points if they meet guidelines detailed in the state's [Guidelines for Culturally-Responsive Reflective Practice in Birth-Five Settings](#), which were prepared by The Cook Inlet Tribal Council and the Clare Swan Early Learning Center and the University Of Alaska, Anchorage.

### Arizona First Steps

For the first time, Arizona First Steps is prioritizing recruitment and engagement of providers that serve children whose home language is other than English, infants and toddler, programs on tribal lands, and programs that serve children in the child welfare system. Previously, programs were selected on a first come, first served basis. One of the implementation challenges First Steps faces in targeting outreach and support to these programs serving emerging bilingual learners is that the primary language of the provider and of the children served by a provider is not consistently captured in regulatory data.

### California: Quality Counts and Tribal Child Care Association of California

#### Quality Counts California

To address issues of inequity and racism within the Quality Counts California system, an equity plan is being created with the support of an external equity-focused organization and a thorough partner engagement process. Areas of focus will include access, ratings, and quality improvement incentive structures. Details are not yet available, so it is not clear to what extent the focus will be on language and culture, however, California is home to our nation's largest population of **emerging bilingual learners** and Early Edge CA has made it a priority to advocate for them, with the vision that "all California children should reap the benefits that come from speaking more than one language." A major part of Early Edge CA's emerging language learner [policy platform](#) is focused on promoting high-quality early care and education programs for **emerging bilingual learners**. It is partnering with Quality Counts California to explore ways to include **emerging bilingual learner** indicators.

#### Tribal Child Care Association of California

Established in 2006, the Tribal Child Care Association of California (TCCAC) is an Association of child care professionals specializing in working with Tribal families, children, and communities. The Association focuses on the needs of tribally regulated child care and education settings, both on and off tribal lands.

Kim Nall, co-chair of TCCAC and her team of board members and staff have developed long standing partnerships with public and private entities throughout the state of California. One of the strongest partnerships is with the California Department of Social Services' Quality Improvement System, Quality Counts California (QCC). QCC

<sup>14</sup> See Hedy Nai-Lin Chang, Charles Bruner, Michelle Stover Wright, [Crafting Early Learning Standards for a Multi-Ethnic Society: Lessons Learned from Washington and Alaska](#), 2008. Its current early learning guidelines can be found at <https://www.alaskaelg.org/>.

recognizes Tribal Region 11, which was developed specifically for Tribal Child Care and provides resources and support to Tribal early learning and care providers and programs so they can help enhance culturally relevant and appropriate early learning and care that will help children to grow and thrive.

TCCAC is the lead for QCC Tribal Region 11. It supports Tribal early learning and care through individualized consultation, resources, training and technical assistance and mini grants to enhance quality in Tribal early learning programs. TCCAC/QCC provides opportunities to network, learn together and to reach out to other CA QCC consortia, regional hubs, trainers, and coaches which are available to the local level to align equitable access for Tribal Child Care and Tribal early learning programming. For more information on TCCAC and its QCC work please visit their website: <https://www.tribalchildcareca.org/qcc-qis-tribal-region>.

## Colorado Shines

The Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) embarked on an extensive stakeholder engagement process and collaborated with early childhood experts to update its QRIS Framework. In August 2021, it launched its updated [Quality Indicators for Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Homes to](#) align with the latest research on quality in early care and education and to have an increased “focus on inclusion, equity and partnerships with families, including standards that:

- Support children with special needs
- Promote equity and cultural diversity
- Help families find community resources and get through hard times
- Improve support for emerging bilingual learners
- Honor all that programs do to support families

The updated QRIS Framework also recognizes the unique circumstances of family child care homes. The total number of standards for home-based providers is reduced to allow greater focus on the aspects of their program that directly support quality” (p.2, Colorado Shines Quality Indicators for Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Homes).

## District of Columbia Capital Quality

DC’s [Capital Quality](#) focuses on cultural and linguistic practices. After programs receive their observation results and Capital Quality designation, the quality facilitator works with the program or provider to create a continuous quality improvement plan (CQIP) and offers coaching and professional development opportunities to meet the goals. The [CQIP](#) includes the following set of quality standards:

- Culturally and linguistically responsive practices are implemented
- Inclusion practices are implemented
- Early care and education professionals meaningfully engage in professional development

## Idaho Steps to Quality

Steps to Quality<sup>15</sup> utilizes an online database to collect provider data on race/ethnicity, language fluency, preferred training language, and preferred business contact language.

This data is used to evaluate which provider groups are benefiting from the system and which are not. This data can help state systems administrators to target their interventions and redesign their system in ways that advance toward racial equity. Step to Quality is beginning to design feedback loops with providers. Its initial focus has been on home-based providers, but the intention is to incorporate beneficiary voice feedback into all aspects of IdahoSTARS. In addition, state system leaders are targeting localized recruitment to New American providers and providing materials, building relationships, and providing supports. Steps to Quality has a new quality-sub category focused on diversity that supports children's cultural identity, including race, national origin, and home language. Language support questions have been standardized in the program assessment and verification applications allowing the system assign interpreter support and translation of assessment and rating documents for programs conducted in languages other than in English.

## Minnesota's Parent Aware

At least for six years, Parent Aware, Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System, has formally had racial equity principles that include a focus on languages and cultural responsiveness. Culturally responsive practices encouraged in *Roots and Wings: Affirming Culture and Preventing Bias in Early Childhood* by Stacey York informed the process to 2016 update [Parent Aware's Standards and Indicators](#), such as:

- Incorporating children's home languages.
- Building partnerships with families.
- Providing culturally consistent care.
- Showing a deep sense of respect for families' cultures.
- Differentiating problem behavior from culturally different patterns of behavior.
- Strengthening families by connecting them with their communities.

The state is in the development of a Parent Aware Racial Equity Action Plan, which began with Minnesota's participation in the BUILD QRIS Think Tank 3.0 and expanded to a private-public partnership funded by the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation, which has involved broad community participation. During the 2021 legislative session, a provision was added to the Minnesota Statutes establishing/ authorizing Parent Aware that requires an Equity Report, conducting and reporting on the outcomes of, and recommendations following outreach to racially, ethnically, culturally, and geographically diverse groups of child care programs/providers to identify any barriers that prevent them from pursuing a Parent Aware Rating. The report is due to the legislature on March 1, 2022.

## New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department

New Mexico's first Assistant Secretary for Native American Early Childhood Education and Care, Jovanna Archuleta, has a long list of goals to accomplish in her new position, one of which is to explore how QRIS in her

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<sup>15</sup> Steps to Quality is receiving technical assistance from BUILD through the Home-based Child Care Community of Practice and the IdahoSTARS Equity Coordinator is a 2021 Equity Leaders Action Network fellow.

state can be more inclusive of tribes. Currently, only two tribal programs are participating in QRIS in New Mexico, and she sees a need to revamp and revise QRIS so that it embraces a broad definition of quality – one that acknowledges that quality looks different in different communities. Ms. Archuleta hopes that someday soon New Mexico’s QRIS will acknowledge the indigenous practices that have been a strength and have served as protective factors for Native American children and families for thousands of years.

Meanwhile, Cabinet Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky, New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department, is using every tool available to increase the supply of early educators and recognizes the value of bilingual educators. New Mexico has instituted a bilingual incentive—a \$1,500 one-time incentive to keep bilingual early educators in the field and incent others to enter the field ([Overview of New Mexico’s Compensation Strategies](#) at 2:30).

The states highlighted below are not the only bright spots. In fact, Washington state is a leader in revising its QRIS from a racial equity perspective, but we did not feature it here because its new materials are not yet complete or available. State and community leaders have done so much work, it seemed a shame to portray a very partial story. Key places to find the most up to date information on Early Achievers on the DCYF website are the [Early Achievers CQI page](#) and the [Equity in Early Achievers](#) page.

The following recommendations emerged from the interviewees sharing the Bright Spots profiled in this report:

### FLEXIBLE AND INTENTIONAL INVESTMENTS IN COMMUNITIES

1. Leaders and policy makers need to invest time examining resource allocation and determining whether resource distribution is equitable. Ask: Who are state or local funds serving well and who are they not serving well or even reaching?
2. Funding needs to be flexible enough to address inequities that are barriers to children's learning, covering things such as basic needs, mental health supports, and technology.
3. To make broader systems change, community organizations need to share research and practices—and be funded to conduct that research—advocate for policy and systems change to benefit the children and families they represent, and connect families to culturally appropriate, linguistically competent community services.

### COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

4. Listening can surface community solutions. Find out: What is working and what is not? How are communities receiving the services? Leaders need to spend time listening to community members, not just organizations or a few leaders within those communities. For example, in one community there was voiced a strong preference for online interactions. By honoring this preference one program went from limited participation to holding a waiting list. And, in Michigan, migrant families were successful in gaining some flexibility from state government and consistency in their children's lives by having licensing recognize a permanent home on a migrant camp as a licensed FFN home so that the licensing process did not have to be restarted each year.
5. Communities should be drivers of the work and community members should be decision makers. Funders and policymakers can support parent advisory groups, interview and focus group processes, feedback loops and accountability mechanisms. More resources need to be invested in community-defined and community-led efforts that strengthen organizations with a history of trust and reputation within the community.
6. Community serving organizations, at minimum, need to have an interpreter for all verbal communication and interactions. Best practice would be recruiting native speakers as staff as well as providing written materials in the children and families' home language such as children's books, toolkits, and activities. Organizations should recruit and develop new staff from within the communities they serve as well as considering trusted and honored older, home language speaking members of the community, as paid staff, or advisors.

### CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES

7. To support the growing numbers of emerging bilingual learners in our country, recognize the value of bilingualism, and support a new generation of bilingual children who are better prepared for success in school and life, all early childhood education programs must have policies and practices in place

that support the ongoing development of home languages while also promoting the acquisition of English.

8. Efforts to support emerging bilingual learners and their families and caregivers must recognize, at an institutional level, the benefit to retaining home language and acknowledge and encourage families to continue developing their child's home language.
9. Efforts to support emerging bilingual learners must recognize the superdiversity within communities and learning settings. Truly responsive supports for children, families, and providers need to consider country of origin, languages and dialects, immigration and refugee status, education in both their home country and the US, age, and cultural norms, among other factors.
10. Home visiting supports should be expanded and tailored to include the whole family; intentionally include FFN providers (grandparents, aunts, uncles) who are caring for the children, particularly in communities where this type of care is prevalent. These family members may also be ideal candidates to be trained to become home visitors or early educators, particularly after having learned from their own home visitation experience.
11. Efforts to support emerging bilingual learners and their families and caregivers also must acknowledge and address the trauma, stress, and racism that these communities have experienced, and continue to experience, and provide augmented, as well as culturally and linguistically competent, mental health supports in these communities.
12. Expand the definitions of culturally and linguistically responsive approaches to recognize the protective factors and adaptive strategies that have enabled families and communities of color to thrive despite trauma and risk factors that they have experienced (in other words, reframe "trauma-informed practices" using strength-based language).

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS

The Bright Spot interviews did not delve into state higher education policy and how those policies control and influence teacher preparation and credentialing. This isn't necessarily deeply relevant to early educators anyway unless they work in the school system; however, it is important that state higher education boards embrace the mission of growing a birth to age five workforce that is diverse and multilingual and that knows how to educate children who are diverse and multilingual. State higher education boards can invest in and change policies that support important elements of models that the Bright Spots include such as: scholarships for bilingual educators to advance in degrees; wrap around supports; cohort models; advising; and relevant coursework aligned to practice for emerging bilingual learners.

13. Equity within the higher education system requires cultural humility. If we want to address the teacher shortage, we need to recognize that there is a multicultural, multilingual, and motivated workforce waiting for institutions to acknowledge its strengths and help it navigate the systems.
14. Build on existing models that work, like the Pamoja Project and Montgomery College; they are working within systems of higher education to advocate for flexibility and augmented supports for individuals from communities that have been underrepresented.

15. Build effective pipelines for immigrants, refugees, and others with multilingual skills.
  - a. Consider bilingual parents who have completed intensive child development and parenting courses as potential candidates for a career in early childhood education.
  - b. Find ways to honor the education and training in countries of origin and establish competency-based credentials so that those who have the education, training, language, and cultural match with the communities they serve can teach and do not have to begin anew in this country. Expand models like the International Education Evaluation in the Ohio Professional Registry.<sup>16</sup>
16. Strengthen the capacity of institutions of higher education to support immigrants, refugees, and non-English speaking/non-traditional students to navigate the system. Ensure that counselors hired to provide supports work closely with department chairs and faculty to develop supports and respond to the unique needs of these students.
17. Develop professional development content that includes culturally inclusive and responsive definitions of quality in early care and education.
18. Support providers through professional networks in which they can advocate for policies and community-based solutions to better assist the families in their community as well as leverage the rich culture and experience of those in the community to grow but not lose sight of the cultural roots.
19. For maximum impact adapt professional development curricula to reflect and honor the culture of the adults with whom it is being shared. Recognize that certain concepts and practices may not be easily translated to some cultures.
20. Invest in professional development, education and workforce supports for home-based child-care providers so that they have equitable access to supports that are relevant to their context and build on their unique strengths in meeting the needs of families.
21. Provide outreach and professional development supports to informal FFN providers who may be interested in formal education and/or a pathway to licensure. Include additional incentives and supports for bilingual/multilingual FFN providers to get connected to systems of support.

## STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS

As mentioned at the beginning of the professional development recommendations, there is much more to explore, so these recommendations are only a small start. We did not delve into the limited capacity of current institutions of higher education, their faculty, and/or administration to take on competency-based certifications related to proficiency in teaching emerging bilingual learners or even the need to diversify the expertise and content knowledge of higher education faculty.

22. Create higher education requirements for monolingual ECE teacher competencies related to understanding, reinforcing, and supporting super-diverse classrooms' home language development.

<sup>16</sup> For more information: <https://occrpa.org/ohio-professional-registry/international-education-verification/>

Classrooms should reflect the languages spoken by the children and families being served and teachers should be fully versed on the unique teaching practices needed to fully support each child who is an emerging bilingual learner.

23. With national universal preschool on the horizon in the US, ensure that the standards and requirements include a broader definition of quality that acknowledges the supports needed for emerging bilingual learners and requires that all states include these components in the implementation of universal preschool.
24. Broaden the definition and accompanying measures of quality to capture culturally and linguistically sensitive practices and embed these measures in state quality frameworks and improvement systems in the manner of the tool being developed by Dr. Carola Oliva-Olson.
25. Include equity in the definition of quality early care and education and embed that definition in quality standards and rating systems.
26. Ensure that cost models for quality early care and education include costs associated with nurturing the assets of emerging bilingual learners such as increased pay for bilingual educators, interpretation for families, specialized professional development for teachers, and specialized materials.<sup>17</sup>
27. Develop a tiered reimbursement or incentive supplement strategy for teachers and teacher assistants who work in state-licensed or registered child care program, Head Start or pre-K who are bilingual or certified as bilingual.

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<sup>17</sup> Zepeda, M., Crolotte, C., Doh, J., and Harris, V.R. (2020) The Dual Language Learner Policy Platform: Informing California's Early Learning and Care Policies and Investments in 2020-21 and Beyond. [https://earlyedgecalifornia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/DLL-Policy-Platform\\_Final-Report.pdf](https://earlyedgecalifornia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/DLL-Policy-Platform_Final-Report.pdf)

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