

2023

In Brief: Learning from the New Round of PDG B-5 Systems Building Grants



## Supporting Multilingual Learners

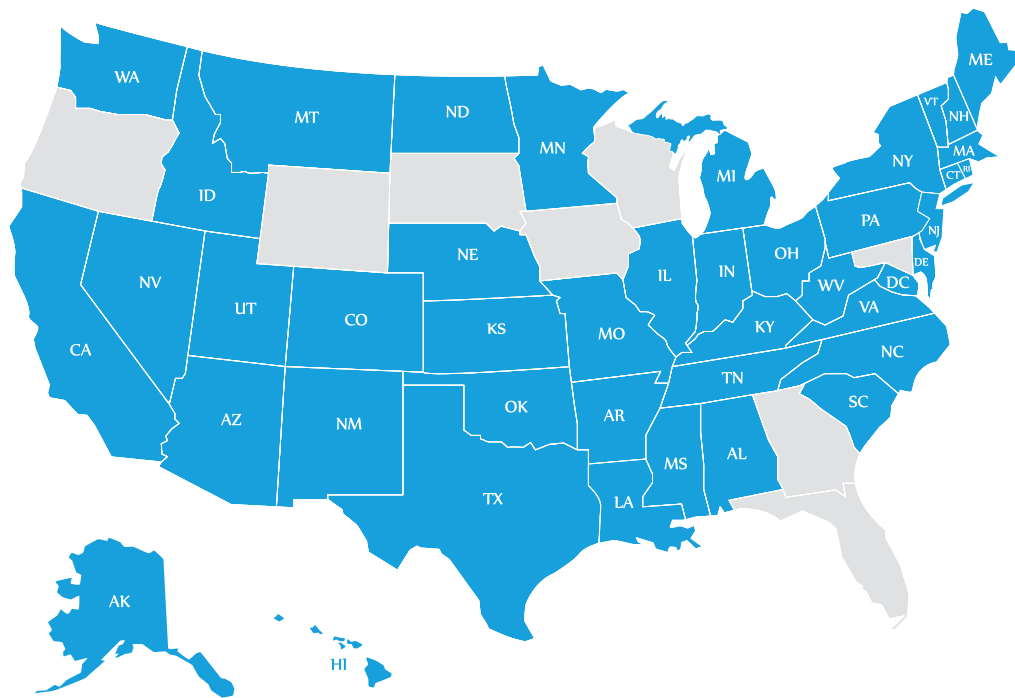
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# Introduction to *In Brief: Learning from the New Round of PDG B-5 Systems Building Grants*

States and territories are drawing on the Preschool Development Birth through Five Planning (PDG B-5 Planning) or Renewal (PDG B-5 Renewal) Grant to advance their early childhood care and education (ECCE) systems. These states are undertaking a rich and broad variety of work with this infusion of resources. The BUILD Initiative, ZERO TO THREE, and Start Early, all of whom are members of the National TA Collaborative to Maximize Federal Early Childhood Investments, collaborated on these briefs to share critical early childhood issues that states and their partners are addressing by using the information available in the PDG B-5 Renewal applications. These grants not only provide immediate benefits and long-term systems implications for the states and their communities; they also shed light on the state of the field, which we attempt to outline through this set of briefs.

**Figure 1. Map of PDG B-5 Planning and Renewal States 2023**



PDG B-5 Planning and Renewal Grants are being used by states across a wide range of content areas in the early childhood care and education system, and in a variety of ways. The federal funding provides a systems framework and seeks to offer flexibility within that framework. The federal funding came with overall guidance focused on coordinating the programs and services within the early childhood care and education system. It aimed to help young children enter kindergarten prepared and ready to succeed by targeting support to populations the states deem priorities based on their assessments of need, particularly their new understanding of the impact of COVID on families and communities. The guidance placed significant emphasis on the early childhood care and education workforce and doing what it would take to attract, train, and retain the workforce needed to maintain high-quality and supportive environments that promote child development and can meet families' unique logistical, linguistic, cultural, and financial needs. Within that broad framework, however, states had enormous latitude.



States are using the federal funding to build capacity, create infrastructure, provide direct services, and pilot work that is new for them. This work is occurring within a broad framework provided by the federal government. As the review of the grant applications in this series of briefs will make clear, states chart their own course when it comes to early childhood systems development. States are working in many varied and exciting ways as they use these resources to take action to improve their ECCE systems; they are undertaking many different projects and initiatives and, often, multiple projects under each of the required activities.

**States are using the federal funding to build capacity, create infrastructure, provide direct services, and pilot work that is new for them.**

Our review suggests that states seem hesitant to take too long a view for their PDG B-5 plans. There are many possible explanations for this. Perhaps it is because each iteration of the federal PDG B-5 competition has been different, and states do not see PDG B-5 as a stable, continuous funding source. It could also be that state decisions that seem to focus on the shorter-term could stem from the need to manage expectations and produce near-term results. There could be a lack of confidence amongst the state and territory grantees that state funding will be available to sustain the work. Or it may be that the broad framework used in the PDG B-5 competition, with so many possibilities identified with each of the required activity areas, detracts from states' ability to have a sharp focus, and leads to many responsive, diffuse strategies. We must ask: Would the children and families who want and need early childhood care and education, the workforce that delivers it every day, and the states be better off if the states understood that they could choose to have a concentrated focus on a few projects rather than on so many?

This series of briefs focuses attention on several topics within the current round of PDG B-5 plans. Not all critical topics or aspects of PDG B-5 plans are covered, such as updates to needs assessment and strategic plans, but we anticipate that other organizations will continue to analyze this rich set of plans and share their analyses. We note, as well, that the briefs are grounded in the plans submitted by the states to the federal government. States may modify their plans, and their grant submissions did not allow for the states to provide in-depth information.

To access the full set of briefs in this series, which are being produced throughout 2023, please visit: <https://buildinitiative.org/learningfrompdgb-5systemsbuildinggrants/>

## Acknowledgements

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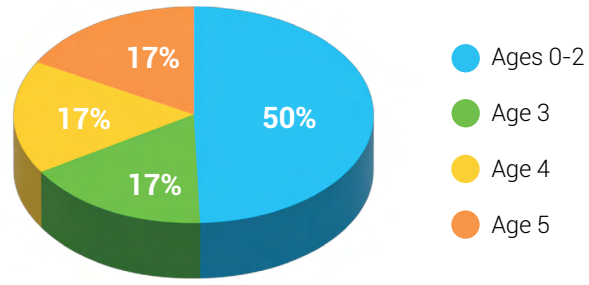
# Why Multilingual Learner Strategies?

As the number of young multilingual learners—children who speak language(s) other than English—increases throughout the country, the focus on supporting language development, rooted in diverse cultural, linguistic, and developmentally appropriate practices, becomes a critical component of the early childhood care and education (ECCE) system.

**In the United States—approximately 50% of children birth to two are multilingual and for children ages 3, 4 and 5, 17% are multilingual.**

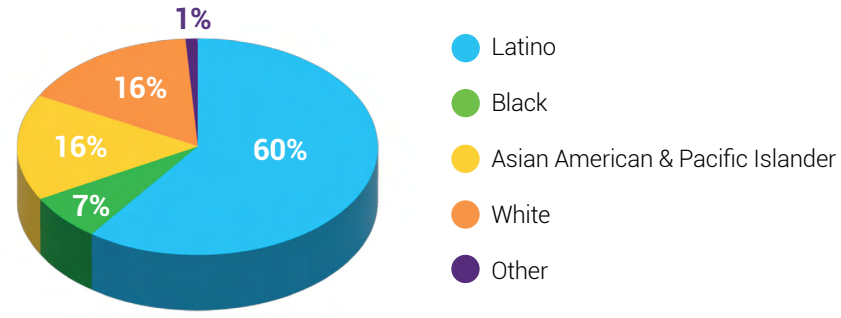
As context for the work on multilingual learners found in PDG B-5 plans, we offer information on multilingual children, 0-5 years of age, in the United States. Figure 2 shows the percentage of multilingual children, 0-5 years old, in the United States—approximately 50% of children birth to two are multilingual and for children ages 3, 4 and 5, 17% are multilingual. Figure 3 looks at the data by race of children 0-5 years of age: 60% of Latino children are multilingual as are 16% of children who are Asian Pacific Islander and white. For Black children, 7% are multilingual.

**Figure 2. Percentage of Multilingual Children Based on Age, Ages 0-5, in the US**



Source: Migration Policy Institute, National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. (2021) U.S. Young Children (ages 0 to 5) by Dual Language Learner Status: National and State Sociodemographic and Family Profiles. Retrieved from [https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/datahub/us-dll-children-profiles-age0-5\\_final.xlsx](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/datahub/us-dll-children-profiles-age0-5_final.xlsx)

**Figure 3. Percentage of Multilingual Children Based on Identified Race, Ages 0-5, in US**



Source: Migration Policy Institute, National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. (2021) U.S. Young Children (ages 0 to 5) by Dual Language Learner Status: National and State Sociodemographic and Family Profiles. Retrieved from [https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/datahub/us-dll-children-profiles-age0-5\\_final.xlsx](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/datahub/us-dll-children-profiles-age0-5_final.xlsx)



Depicting the top five languages in the US, Table 1 highlights the diversity of languages, in addition to English, multilingual children are exposed to and use (e.g., speak and hear). The primary language, other than English, continues to be Spanish.

**Table 1. Exposure and Use of Top 5 US Languages by Multilingual Children (0-5)**

Language	Number of Children (ages 0-5)	Percentage of Children (ages 0-5)
Spanish	4,405,000	19.3%
Chinese	241,000	11%
Arabic	161,000	0.7%
Tagalog	120,000	0.5%
German	105,000	0.46%

Source: Migration Policy Institute, National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. (2021) *U.S. Young Children (ages 0 to 5) by Dual Language Learner Status: National and State Sociodemographic and Family Profiles*. Retrieved from [https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/datahub/us-dll-children-profiles-age0-5\\_final.xlsx](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/datahub/us-dll-children-profiles-age0-5_final.xlsx)

Of the PDG B-5 Planning and Renewal states, 12 states—California, Texas, New York, Illinois, New Jersey, Arizona, Washington, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Virginia, and Michigan—are among the 15 states with the greatest number of young multilingual learners.

**Table 2. Top 15 States with Multilingual Learners, ages 0-5**

<b>California</b>	<b>1,689,000</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>	<b>284,000</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>Massachusetts</b>	<b>164,000</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>Texas</b>	<b>1,138,000</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>Arizona</b>	<b>206,000</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>157,000</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>New York</b>	<b>591,000</b>	<b>45%</b>	Georgia	176,000	23.5%	<b>Virginia</b>	<b>155,000</b>	<b>26.5%</b>
Florida	538,000	42%	<b>Washington</b>	<b>176,000</b>	<b>33%</b>	Maryland	137,000	33%
<b>Illinois</b>	<b>301,000</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>Pennsylvania</b>	<b>168,000</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>Michigan</b>	<b>107,000</b>	<b>16%</b>

Source: Migration Policy Institute, National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. (2021) *U.S. Young Children (ages 0 to 5) by Dual Language Learner Status: National and State Sociodemographic and Family Profiles*. Retrieved from [https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/datahub/us-dll-children-profiles-age0-5\\_final.xlsx](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/datahub/us-dll-children-profiles-age0-5_final.xlsx)

PDG B-5 grants provide an opportunity to demonstrate the importance of a language-focused approach within the ECCE system. Central to this approach is:

- Engaging families as experts in their child's language and culture.
- Supporting practitioners in valuing and purposefully incorporating language and culture in ECCE program environments and play-based instruction.
- Understanding that multilingual children are exposed to language in multiple contexts – home(s), ECCE programs, neighborhood, and community.
- Promoting the needs of multilingual children and their families in local, state, and federal programs and policies.

In this brief, we focus on the specific strategies that are called out in the PDG B-5 plans in support of multilingual learners.





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## Discussion of Multilingual Learner Strategies

PDG B-5 plans addressed the needs of multilingual learners through seven primary strategies:

1) making resources available in other languages, 2) assuring they are culturally appropriate, 3) providing training and technical assistance on language development for practitioners,

4) providing degrees and credentials to support a multilingual workforce, 5) recruiting and retaining a multilingual workforce, 6) developing a common process to identify multilingual learners, and 7) supporting tribal language immersion and community engagement. The first four focal points—translation of resources and professional development, whether through training or support for degrees—are foundational activities in supporting multilingual children’s language development and communicating to families. The last three strategies—recruiting and retaining a multilingual workforce, developing a common process to identify multilingual learners, and supporting tribal language and community engagement—focus on ensuring children have access to equitable learning opportunities, inclusive of language and culture, that meet families’ needs and support the child, family, and community with an assets-based and language-centered approach. Table 3 provides an overview and is followed by a discussion of each of these areas, with highlights of the strategies being used.



**Translation of resources and professional development, whether through training or support for degrees—are foundational activities in supporting multilingual children's language development and communicating to families.**



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**Table 3. Multilingual Learner Strategy Overview**

MULTILINGUAL LEARNER FOCUSED STRATEGY	AL	AK	AR	AZ	CA	CO	CT	DE	HI	IL	ID	IN	KS	KY	LA	MA	ME	MI	MN	MO	MS	MT	NC	ND	NE	NH	NJ	NM	NV*	NY	OH	OK	PA	RI	SC	TN	TX	UT	VA	VT	WA	WV				
<b>Translation of Resources</b>																																														
Translate specific resources for parents and/or practitioners	•	•		•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•		•			•	•		•			•	•	•			•	•		•	•	•		•	•	•		•	•	•				
Ensure resources are culturally appropriate	•	•								•			•		•				•							•	•			•	•			•		•			•	•	•					
<b>Training to Support Language Development</b>																																														
Create, expand, or enhance training that supports multilingual learners					•			•	•	•						•	•								•			•				•	•	•			•		•	•	•					
<b>Workforce Degrees and Credentials</b>																																														
Offer credentials, badges, or degrees to support multilingual learners and their practitioners								•							•																															
<b>Multilingual Workforce Recruitment and Retention</b>																																														
Recruit and retain multilingual workforce									•		•											•									•										•					
<b>Process to Identify Multilingual Learners</b>																																														
Develop a common process to identify multilingual learners											•																																			
<b>Tribal Language and Community Engagement</b>																																														
Support tribal language immersion and community engagement																																														

\* State mentions activities to support multilingual learners in PDG B-5 application but does not indicate use of PDG funding.

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**Table 4. Translation of Resources**

	AL	AK	AZ	CA	CO	IL	HI	ID	IN	KS	LA	MI	MN	MS	NC	ND	NE	NH	NJ	NY	OH	PA	RI	SC	TN	TX	UT	VA	VT	WA	WV
Translate specific resources for parents and/or practitioners	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ensure resources are culturally appropriate	•	•				•					•	•	•					•	•	•	•		•		•		•	•	•		

Translating resources is the most common activity in the PDG B-5 applications. Twenty-eight of the 42 states plan to use PDG funding to translate resources for families and/or practitioners. Of these 28 states, seven did not identify the language(s). Of the twenty-one states that identified language(s), all but one state included at least translation in Spanish. Other identified languages included Simplified and Traditional Chinese, Somali, Korean, and Vietnamese. One state, *Alaska*, will focus on translating resources for parents and practitioners in Hmong, Somali, Yupik, Tagalog, and Tlingit. Additionally, 15 states, *Alabama, Alaska, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Virginia, Vermont, and Washington* will review and revise resources to ensure they are culturally appropriate.

## 文 A Training to Support Language Development

**Table 5. Training to Support Language Development**

	CA	DE	HI	IL	MA	ME	NE	NM	OK	PA	RI	TX	VA	VT	WA
Create, expand, or enhance training that supports multilingual learners	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Fifteen states—*California, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Vermont, and Washington*—plan to use PDG B-5 funding to create, expand, and/or enhance existing professional development supporting multilingual learners' language development. Professional development topics cover a range: administering a culturally-appropriate developmental screener, including multilingual children in curriculum development, ensuring teacher practices are culturally competent, building anti-racist child care environments, and providing professional development supports in Spanish.





## Workforce Degrees and Credentials

**Table 6. Workforce Degrees and Credentials**

	DE	MA	SC
Offer credentials, badges, or degrees to support multilingual learners and their practitioners	•	•	•

As states create and/or enhance their professional development offerings, three states—*Delaware*, *Massachusetts*, and *South Carolina*—will offer credentials, badges, or degrees to support multilingual learners. Although *Delaware* does not offer a specific credential or badge to support multilingual children, this state will offer support cohorts in multiple languages for CDA attainment and Associate's and Bachelor degree completion. This state will also require higher education partners to teach coursework in Spanish and Haitian Creole. *Massachusetts* will launch a revised credentialing system with new expectations that highlight children's unique language trajectories. *South Carolina* will offer badges upon completion of a micro-credential on supporting multilingual learners.



## Multilingual Workforce Recruitment and Retention

**Table 7. Multilingual Workforce Recruitment and Retention**

	ID	IL	MS	OH	VA
Recruit and retain multilingual workforce	•	•	•	•	•

*Idaho*, *Illinois*, *Mississippi*, *Ohio*, and *Virginia* plan to use PDG B-5 funding to recruit and retain multilingual child care providers and lead or assistant teachers.

*Idaho* plans to actively recruit and support Spanish-speaking providers to start, expand, and sustain home-based child care programs in rural Latinx areas of the state. *Idaho* will meet the immediate needs of new home-based providers by providing in-depth training, ensuring connections with local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, and providing networking opportunities with new providers.

With PDG B-5 funding, *Illinois* will identify multilingual learners and aims to develop a holistic and sustainable approach to build and properly compensate the bilingual ECCE workforce.

*Mississippi* plans to provide bonuses for programs that employ a lead or assistant teacher who is fluent in a child's home language. Child care providers serving families who do not speak English will receive a monthly subsidy bonus for employing a lead or assistant teacher who is fluent in a child's home language.

In collaboration with local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies that are familiar with the child care landscape and state licensing standards, *Ohio* will implement Luna's ESCALERAS program and support informal and unlicensed home-based child care programs to become licensed.

*Virginia* is prioritizing the recruitment of Spanish-speaking educators by expanding its Fast Track training program that includes four weeks of online and on-the-job training that will be available in Spanish.



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## Process to Identify Multilingual Learners

**Table 8. Process to Identify Multilingual Learners**

	IL
Develop a common process to identify multilingual learners	•

*Illinois* will implement a common identification process across the mixed delivery system leading to the full integration of multilingual learners into the ECCE system. The process will include a home language survey and screener along with professional development for staff.



## Tribal Language and Community Engagement

**Table 9. Tribal Language and Community Engagement**

	NM
Support tribal language immersion and community engagement	•

*New Mexico* will partner with the Jemez Pueblo and the University of Hawaii at Hilo to advance language immersion programs in tribal communities across the state. As part of this activity, *New Mexico* will conduct research to support oral literacy strategies focused on overall literacy development of Native children in their home language(s); identify promising practices that share and showcase current strategies, program implementation, and two models of education at different stages of development; build capacity to provide support to *New Mexico* tribes developing language and culture-based efforts within tribal programs, schools, and overall community-based efforts; and provide training, professional development and mentorship to support the development and advancement of tribal language-based priorities.



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## Looking Forward

Overarching themes from the PDG B-5 applications have implications for future work at the state and federal level in several areas, including use of terminology, data collection and analysis, inclusion of multiple languages, and focus on unique assets. We discuss these opportunities, and close with overall considerations for the federal government.

**Use of terminology.** Terminology across the PDG B-5 applications varied and included multilingual learners, dual language learners (DLLs), emergent bilinguals, English language learners (ELL), English learner (EL), and children receiving English as a Second Language (ESL) services. Often, these terms are used interchangeably. We recommend consistent terminology be used and note that the term “multilingual” highlights the knowledge and use of multiple languages, especially in the early years, inclusive of the child’s home language(s), developing simultaneously or sequentially. The use of consistent terminology is a foundational step that will lead to systematic data collection across all ECCE programs at the local, state, and federal levels. Having the ability to analyze meaningful data will inform the creation of standardized policies leading to identification and equitably serving multilingual learners in ECCE programs before entering Kindergarten.

**Data collection and analysis.** Although the term “multilingual” highlights the assets of language development more broadly, for policy and data collection purposes in kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) school-based settings, the term “English language learner or English learner (ELL or EL)” becomes widely used as students are identified, receive appropriate language supports and services, and participate in an annual language proficiency assessment. These data are used to ensure multilingual students are supported in attaining English proficiency and high levels of academic achievement. Additionally, the student-level and aggregated data are critical in assisting school personnel in providing appropriate instructional programs and determining funding allocations.

Since language development occurs well before kindergarten, federal guidance encourages states to compile data on young multilingual children to inform outreach and recruitment strategies, resource allocation, professional development efforts, and technical assistance. Furthermore, the guidance highlights the importance of states understanding the number of multilingual learners who are and who are not participating in the ECCE system.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, obtaining data any data on multilingual children, ages 0-5, was identified as a significant gap in many states’ needs assessments. In fact, most states do not collect or analyze data on young multilingual children, resulting inadequate and often inaccurate information used by program and policy leaders.

Following *Illinois’* lead, as states continue working on needs assessments and strategic plans, it is critical to include the use of consistent terminology and developmentally appropriate language tools, such as a home language survey and observational assessment, to gather information about multilingual children across all ECCE programs. In doing so, the comprehensive data on multilingual learners will inform local and state



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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Health & Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. (2017). *Policy Statement on Supporting the Development of Children who are Dual Language Learners in Early Childhood Programs*. Administration for Children and Families. Retrieved from [www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ecd/dll\\_guidance\\_document\\_final.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ecd/dll_guidance_document_final.pdf).



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policies, funding and resource allocation, and programmatic decisions that support the whole child. A uniform data collection approach can be put forward by the federal government.

**Inclusion of multiple languages.** Nearly one-fifth of ECCE practitioners work in “high Hispanic-serving settings” (i.e., enrollment at or above 25 percent),<sup>2</sup> and nineteen of the PDG B-5 applications reflect resource translation into Spanish and/or recruitment of Spanish-speaking educators. According to the Migration Policy Institute, the top ten languages other than English include Spanish (or Spanish Creole), Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, French, Arabic, Korean, German, Russian, and French Creole.<sup>3</sup> Of these top 10 languages, states specified they will translate materials in Spanish, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, Tagalog, and Vietnamese; the other languages were not identified. In collecting data on children’s home language(s), at a minimum, states can use that information to better inform their translation and interpretation support for children, families, practitioners, and communities. More broadly, this information could be used to advance equity-centered ECCE policies and programmatic decisions related to multilingual learners.

**Focus on unique assets of multilingual learners.**

Of the PDG applications, 40 states mentioned multilingual learners in their application. In 27 of the 40 PDG B-5 applications, multilingual children were identified as a vulnerable or underserved population and included with children with disabilities, children experiencing homelessness, children living in poverty, and children living in rural areas. Five of the 27 states that categorized multilingual children as vulnerable did not include activities to support multilingual children (note: one state intended to use non-PDG funding). Of the remaining 22 PDG B-5 applications, seven states identified translation of resources or ensuring resources are culturally appropriate as their only strategy. Research highlights the extraordinary abilities and individual needs of multilingual children and their families, yet only 15 of the 27 states that include multilingual learners as a vulnerable population identify specific activities to support families and/or practitioners of multilingual learners.

“Children who are multilingual learners have many racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic assets. The ECCE professionals working with them may need to provide specialized home language support and training.”

When looking at the 13 PDG B-5 applications from states that do not categorize multilingual learners as a vulnerable population, two states identify translation as their only strategy. More specifically, the remaining states that *do not* categorize multilingual learners as a vulnerable population, include specific activities focused on language development, family engagement, and incentives for practitioners who speak the child’s home language(s).

Children who are multilingual learners have many racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic assets. The ECCE professionals working with them may need to provide specialized home language support and training. Likewise, the ways in which multilingual families and communities are supported and engaged in local and state decision-making, a key priority in the PDG B-5 applications, also requires specialized and individualized supports and resources. The inclusion of multilingual learners as a category in vulnerable populations may dilute the identification of child, family, and community assets and needs. Transformation from a deficit-based orientation of all vulnerable and underserved populations to an asset framework is critical for best meeting the needs of multilingual learners.

<sup>2</sup> Crosby, D., Mendez, J., & Stephens, C. (2023). *Characteristics of the early childhood workforce serving Latino children*. National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families. Retrieved from [www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/characteristics-of-the-early-childhood-workforce-serving-latino-children/](http://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/characteristics-of-the-early-childhood-workforce-serving-latino-children/).

<sup>3</sup> Batalova, J and Zong, J. (2016). *Language Diversity and English Proficiency*. Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved from [www.migrationpolicy.org/article/language-diversity-and-english-proficiency-united-states](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/language-diversity-and-english-proficiency-united-states).



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**Considerations for federal action.** State activities related to supporting multilingual children, their families, and ECCE professionals in PDG B-5 applications are one-time activities, such as translating resources for families and practitioners. Ongoing funding is needed to develop a sustainable support structure that embeds racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity at the core of developmentally appropriate practices that highlight the assets of families and communities. Focusing on language development and multilingualism as an asset requires an intentional focus on multilingual learners, their families, and communities. We recommend a more focused, concentrated effort by the federal government to support multilingual learners 0-5, their families, and the ECCE workforce. This approach would:

- Focus on language development, including home language(s), as exposure to language and opportunities to use language in multiple contexts are critical in the early years.
- Engage families who speak languages other than English in decision-making processes with racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic competence and humility.
- Support the alignment of community needs and data to policy, programmatic, and funding decisions.
- Commit resources to data collection and analysis – a key input to a multitude of local, state and federal decisions.
- Provide financial incentives to recruit and retain practitioners who share children’s racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.

Every child, family, and community across the country will benefit when the ECCE system supports and celebrates children’s home language(s), race, culture, and ethnicity. Furthermore, having data on multilingual learners and engaging parents of young multilingual children in local and state decision-making will result in more equitable opportunities for all children and families.

“Every child, family, and community across the country will benefit when the ECCE system supports and celebrates children's home language(s), race, culture, and ethnicity.”



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