

Higher Education Learning and Professional Development Work Group (HELP) Strategies for Advancing Early Childhood Dual Language Learning and Culturally Responsive Practices

Approximately one quarter of Illinois' children from birth through the early elementary grades have a home language other than English and are simultaneously learning two or more languages. The U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education released a Policy Statement in June, 2016 making clear that supporting bilingualism from the earliest years has wide ranging personal and societal benefits including enriched cognitive skills, social aptitude, and expanded employment opportunities for individuals as well as increased U.S. competitiveness in the world market.

The following objectives are intended to accelerate Illinois' efforts in cultivating a linguistically and culturally diverse early childhood workforce. Early childhood programs, regardless of funding stream, require teachers and leaders who can encourage healthy development for each child across all domains of learning including intellectual, reasoning, and social/emotional development.

Recommended Policy/Program Strategies

Objective 1 – Early Childhood Competencies and Teacher Preparation

- Ensure that higher education faculty have access to culturally and linguistically relevant resources to support preparing teacher candidates with culturally responsive teaching and language instructional practices.
 - Embedding relevant content will strengthen staff knowledge and skills to effectively assist children with two or more emerging languages.
 - Gateways to Opportunity competencies and rubrics for demonstrating early childhood knowledge and skills will advance teacher preparation at the Associate and Bachelor's degree levels to consistently support the state's future teacher candidates.
 - Higher education programs will make every effort to provide students with field experiences that support building skills for teaching multilingual, multicultural children.

Objective 2 – Gateways to Opportunity Credentials

- Candidates holding Gateways to Opportunity credentials will be asked at the renewal of their ECE and Directors Credentials to demonstrate professional development in topics related to working with multilingual, multicultural children and their families.
 - ✓ All ECE and Directors Credential recipients will be explicitly advised that they will need to demonstrate professional development in working with multilingual, multicultural children and their families as part of their renewal process.

Please forward any comments or feedback to Joyce Weiner at jweiner@ounceofprevention.org

- Design a series of Gateways approved trainings to provide knowledge and skills to existing teachers, assistant teachers, program directors and school leaders on instructional practices that enhance learning environments for children from multilingual, multicultural backgrounds.
 - ✓ Approximately 75% of Gateways credentials are currently granted through the direct route.

Objective 3 – Associate Level Bilingual/ESL Credential or Certificate

- Develop coursework at the Associate degree level that comprises a Bilingual/ESL credential or certificate to prepare early childhood staff, including those in child care and Head Start settings, to effectively teach multilingual, multicultural children.
 - Identify early childhood and bilingual experts to research and design an Associate level credential or certificate that can be vetted in the field for feedback.
 - Align content of Associate level credential or certificate with the BA level endorsement to permit courses at the Associate level to articulate towards an ISBE Bilingual/ESL endorsement at the Baccalaureate level.
 - ✓ Allow a candidate to take the Bilingual language test at any time and save the results towards their endorsement.
 - ✓ An Associate level credential or certificate would allow non-licensed staff to demonstrate proficiency in supporting children who are English Learners and increase their marketability and compensation.

Objective 4 – Bilingual/ESL Endorsement for Non-Licensed BA Early Childhood Teachers

- Provide non-licensure Baccalaureate early childhood candidates access to ISBE Bilingual/ESL endorsement coursework to increase the number of teaching staff with knowledge and skills for supporting children's language and literacy development.
 - Increased access to coursework allows non-licensed staff working in child care and Head Start programs to demonstrate proficiency in supporting children who are English Learners and increase staff marketability and compensation.
 - Encourage and support bilingual baccalaureate/graduate degreed teachers to take the language exam in conjunction with endorsement courses in order to expand the number of early childhood teachers able to teach multilingual children in child care and Head Start settings.
 - ✓ These teachers will also increase the pool of candidates eligible to earn a 5th year Master's degree and teaching license at several IL institutions.

Objective 5 – Engage High School Graduates who hold a Seal of Biliteracy

- Recruit and support IL high school graduates who hold a Seal of Biliteracy into the early childhood field.
 - Advocate for the IL Seal of Biliteracy serving as a passing score equivalency for the language test towards a Bilingual Endorsement since it demonstrates a high level of proficiency in English and another language.
 - Advocate for the Seal of Biliteracy articulating towards 12 hours of World Language credit towards a college degree.

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Objective 6 – IL Articulation Initiative Panel

- Ensure that courses approved by the IL Early Childhood Articulation Initiative include pedagogy, theory, and experiences for promoting English Learner language and literacy development and culturally responsive practices as a foundation for candidates to advance their knowledge and skills at the B.A. level.
 - Align content in Panel approved EC courses with the Bilingual/ESL Endorsement enable AA level courses to count towards content in the baccalaureate Bilingual/ESL endorsement.

Objective 7 – ExceleRate Quality Rating System

- Embed defined steps and guidance for culturally and linguistically responsive practice at the Bronze, Silver, and Goal levels of quality to provide early childhood staff and programs a clear pathway for effectively instructing and engaging multilingual, multicultural children and families.

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