

XII. Dual Language Learners in Early Childhood

Early childhood programs or early childhood settings include any program that provides early care and education to young children birth to age five, prior to Kindergarten entry.

Children who are Dual Language Learners are learning two (or more) languages at the same time, or learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language¹.

ESSA amendments further promote the inclusion of ELs in early learning programs as part of Title III.²

ESEA Section 3102, which outlines the purposes of Title III, now explicitly includes preschool teachers.

- One of the purposes of Title III is to assist teachers (including preschool teachers), principals and other school leaders, State educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools in establishing, implementing and sustaining effective language instruction educational programs designed to assist in teaching English learners, including immigrant children and youth.
- Another purpose of Title III is to assist teachers (including preschool teachers), principals and other school leaders, State educational agencies, and local educational agencies to develop and enhance their capacity to provide effective instructional programs designed to prepare English learners, including immigrant children and youth, to enter all-English instructional settings.

ESEA Section 3115, which outlines provisions related to the Title III EL formula subgrants, now refers to early childhood education programs as part of the stated purposes of subgrants and in the authorized uses of funds.

- One of the purposes of Title III EL formula subgrants is developing and implementing new language instruction educational programs and academic content instructional programs for English learners and immigrant children and youth, including early childhood education programs, elementary school programs, and secondary school programs.
- LEAs receiving Title III EL formula subgrants may use funds to develop and implement effective preschool, elementary school, or secondary school language instruction educational programs that are coordinated with other relevant programs and services.

ESEA Section 3116, which contains the requirements for local plans for the Title III EL subgrants, includes a new assurance pertaining to early learning programs, if applicable.

- LEAs must assure that they will, if applicable, coordinate activities and share relevant data under the plan with local Head Start and Early Head Start agencies, including migrant and seasonal Head Start agencies, and other early childhood education providers.

An LEA receiving a Title III subgrant may use a portion of those funds to provide effective preschool LIEPs that are coordinated with other relevant programs and services by providing supplemental language instruction for ELs in public preschool programs. In doing so, an LEA may braid Title III subgrant funds with other funding streams available to provide effective preschool language instruction for ELs. As with any use of the funds under Title III, an LEA must comply with the statutory supplement-not-supplant provision under ESEA Section 3115 (See questions A-2 and A-3.) An LEA

¹ Dual Language Learners. (Reissued by ACF January 5, 2017). Retrieved May 8, 2018, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/dual-language-learners>
Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development

² Non-Regulatory Guidance: English Learners and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Sept. 23, 2016) Under the Congressional Review Act, Congress has passed, and the President has signed, a resolution of disapproval of the accountability and State plans final regulations that were published on November 29, 2016 (81 FR 86076). This guidance document is unaffected by that resolution and remains applicable. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essatitleiiiiguidenglishlearners92016.pdf>

should prioritize funds for high-quality and effective preschool programs when utilizing Title III funds to support language instruction for ELs in preschool, as these programs may be more likely to produce positive outcomes like improved school readiness and language development.³

High-quality, intentional, and consistent exposure to the home language and to English can set children on a positive trajectory toward school success and bilingualism, a desirable trait in the job market. Language growth in bilingual children is associated with the quality and quantity of language exposure they experience in each language.

“Language exposure” is directing speech to children through reading, singing, or talking.

Studies examining variations of dual immersion models in preschool programs indicate that children who are DLLs in such programs do as well or better on English language skills and significantly better on home language skills, than their peers in settings where only English is used.⁴

Taken together, research on language use in early childhood programs, and on the aforementioned benefits of supporting home language development, including fostering bilingualism⁵, maintaining cultural connections and communication with family members⁶, and the transferability of home language skills to English language acquisition⁷, suggests that systematic and deliberate exposure to English, paired with supporting home language development within high quality early childhood settings, can result in strong, positive outcomes for children who are DLLs, as well as positive outcomes for native English speakers⁸.

[Policy Statement on Supporting the Development of Children Who Are Dual Language Learners in Early Childhood Programs](#) (Jan. 5, 2017)

Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services U.S. Department of Education.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Vitello, V., Downer, J., & Williford, A. (2011). Preschool classroom experiences of dual language learners: Summary findings from publically funded programs in 11 states. In C. Howes, J. Downer, & R. Pianta (Eds.) *Dual language learners in the early childhood classroom*. Pp. 45-68. Baltimore, MD. Brookes Publishing.; Farver, J., Lonigan, C., & Eppe, S. (2009). Effective early literacy skill development for young Spanish speaking English language learners: An experimental study of two methods. *Child Development*, 80, 703-719; Barnett, W. S., Yarosz, D., Thomas, J., Jung, K., & Blanco, D. (2007). Two-way and monolingual English immersion in preschool education: An experimental comparison. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 22, 277–293.; Valentino, R. A., & Reardon, S. F. (2015). Effectiveness of four instructional programs designed to serve English Learners: Variations by ethnicity and initial English proficiency. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*.

⁵ Adesope, O. O., Lavin, T., Thompson, T., & Ungerleider, C.. (2010). A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Cognitive Correlates of Bilingualism. *Review of Educational Research*, 80(2), 207–245.; Bialystok, E. (2001). *Bilingualism in development: Language, literacy, and cognition*. Cambridge University Press.

⁶ Espinosa, L. M. (2013). *PreK-3rd: Challenging Common Myths about Dual Language Learners: An Update to the Seminal 2008 Report*. Foundation for Child Development.; August, D., & Shanahan, T. (2006). *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on language-minority children and youth*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

⁷ Hoff, E. (2013). Interpreting the early language trajectories of children from low-SES and language minority homes: Implications for closing achievement gaps. *Developmental psychology*, 49(1), 4-14.; Sparks, R. L., Patton, J., Ganschow, L., Humbach, N., & Javorsky, J. (2008). Early first-language reading and spelling skills predict later second-language reading and spelling skills. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100, 162– 174.

⁸ McCabe, A., Bornstein, M., Wishard Guerra, A., Kuohirko, Y., Paez, M., Tamis-Lemonda, C., et al. (2013). *Multilingual children: Beyond myths and toward best practices*. Society for Research in Child Development, 2013; Halle, T., Hair, E., Wandner, L., McNamara, M., & Chien, N. (2012). Predictors and outcomes of early versus later English language proficiency among English language learners. *Early childhood research quarterly*, 27(1), 1-20.; Kuhl, P. K. (2011). Early language learning and literacy: neuroscience implications for education. *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 5(3), 128-142; August, D., & Shanahan, T. (2006). *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on language-minority children and youth*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.