

THE IMPACT OF THE BILINGUAL TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM: EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW THE PROFESSION

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Executive Summary



INTRODUCTION

California is a national leader in its commitment to policies and practices that support English Learners (ELs) and Multilingual Learners (MLs), including multilingual/dual language instruction. While policies such as Proposition 58, the English Learner Roadmap, and California Global 2030 continue to inspire educators and families to increase dual language opportunities for students, dual language programs are still limited and therefore inaccessible to many students. One key reason for this challenge is the lack of qualified bilingual teachers to provide instruction in multilingual/dual language settings.

In 2017, the legislature approved AB 99, establishing the Bilingual Teacher Professional Development Program (BTPDP) to help California schools meet the growing demand for bilingual teachers in alignment with the increasing state policies promoting multilingualism. Eight grantees received \$625,000 each to (1) support credentialed teachers to acquire their Bilingual Authorization (BLA), (2) support paraprofessionals to earn a credential and BLA, and (3) provide professional learning on bilingual/dual language education to teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators.

This research brief outlines findings from LMU-CEEL's independent mixed methods examination of BTPDP implementation across the grantees in order to document trends in program impact and develop policy and program recommendations to address bilingual teacher shortages.

FINDINGS

1. BTPDP succeeded in expanding the bilingual workforce, but it was hampered by logistical barriers.
2. Program structures helped develop educator and administrator knowledge and skills; still, better planning and support structures are needed.
3. Partnerships fostered positive outcomes and revealed structural challenges.
4. A short grant period and limited funding challenge sustainability.

California leaders have developed an ambitious set of goals to ensure a multilingual future for the state's students. Our analysis unearthed both successes in increasing the bilingual teacher workforce as well as significant challenges that must be addressed to ensure the state's vision can be realized. We propose three recommendations to help state and local policy actors develop a coherent and sustainable bilingual teacher education system by eliminating obstacles and building on the successes illuminated in our findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure adequate investments in California's multilingual workforce.

- A) State leaders must plan for a sustainable approach to funding beyond the new, one-time \$20 million allocation that funds the BTPDP through 2028-29.
- B) The California Department of Education should create guidance and criteria for the current \$20 million allocation by:
- Ensuring differentiated and proportional funding based on the number and diverse contexts of candidates across California;
 - Creating longer grant periods that allow grantees to strategically develop well-planned, sustainable programs and bilingual staffing;
 - Formally building partnerships and networking among grantees and multilingual/dual language education experts, including from within CDE, into the grant program through statewide convenings and other professional learning opportunities that support cross-branch learning; and
 - Developing grantee and CDE reporting criteria that describe overall impact to inform future funding beyond 2029.

2. Expand multilingual/dual language teacher credential/authorization programs and testing options.

- A) Educator preparation programs should clarify and communicate credential/authorization program options for multilingual/dual language teachers by:
- Creating new pathways that allow prospective bilingual teachers to earn their BLA and;
 - Communicating and coordinating program design to provide greater clarity across preparation programs regarding simultaneous and/or sequential credential, bilingual pathways, and course requirements.

- B) The Commission on Teacher Credentialing should require that testing companies eliminate logistical roadblocks, particularly for prospective bilingual teachers in rural areas and working professionals by:
- Expanding testing centers and available testing dates, including during the summer; and
 - Ensuring testing companies implement those requirements with fidelity.

3. Intentionally develop multilingual/dual language programs and provide encouragement and support to promote successful multilingual/dual language teachers and leaders.

- A) School and district staff develop multilingual/dual language by:
- Taking at least one year to design intentional, strategic multilingual/dual language programs and then seek to align bilingual staffing needs – and teacher preparation timelines and funding – accordingly, with a lens toward future expansion across grade levels;
 - Building on the linguistic assets of multilingual youth, including students who earn the Seal of Biliteracy, by fostering their interest in serving as bilingual/dual language teachers; and
 - Providing ongoing professional learning to support beginning, current, and returning teachers and develop mentors, coaches, and leaders to ensure effective implementation and support for multilingual/dual language education.

Future iterations of the BTPDP should reflect the lessons learned from the first grant cycle. Future research is also needed to inquire into the long-term impacts across grantees and funding cycles. Those include the need for sustainable and proportional funding, the elimination of logistical and programmatic barriers to the success of prospective teachers, and the need for strong planning and support structures. Implementing these changes will ensure the state realizes its vision of a multilingual California for all.