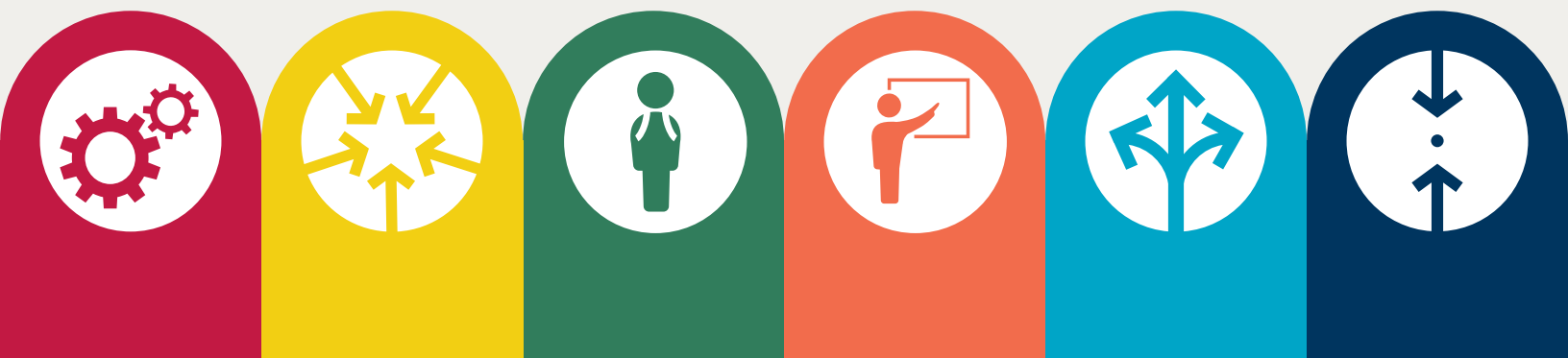




# Unlocking Learning Acceleration for Multilingual Learners

**How TNTP's Six Levers of Learning  
Acceleration Can Drive Positive, Lasting  
Outcomes for Multilingual Learners Nationwide**



# Unlocking Learning Acceleration For Multilingual Learners

How TNTP's six levers of learning acceleration can drive positive, lasting outcomes for multilingual learners nationwide.

## Executive Summary

TNTP has long focused on the growing population of multilingual learner (ML) students, exploring what school systems need to do to target their unique needs and amplify their strengths. The influx of federal funds to public schools because of the COVID-19 pandemic offered a unique opportunity to look at how schools allocated the funds to support MLs and to identify best-in-class examples of programs designed to better support them. This report uses the framework of [learning acceleration](#), a strategy to support students by providing grade-level work and just-in-time supports (rather than remediation, which delays access to grade-level content), to provide school system leaders with templates for supporting MLs in targeted ways.

Based on a comprehensive education dataset from Burbio, our analysis found that 11 percent of districts targeted some portion of their funds from the American Rescue Plan's Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) to interventions specifically supporting MLs. These districts on average had higher populations of students of color—58 percent—and multilingual learners—13 percent—than did districts that did not allocate funds toward ML interventions—42 percent and 7 percent, respectively. Our analysis indicates that 2.8 million multilingual learners in Burbio's dataset attend school in a district that did not plan to spend ESSER funding on interventions specifically targeted to them. To the extent that ESSER spending plans are an indication of school district priorities, this lack of targeted support for such a significant student population is alarming.

We wanted to learn from school systems that made intentional investments specifically targeting MLs, and so to examine their strategies we engaged leaders in six districts: Surry County and Charlotte-Mecklenburg in North Carolina; Gadsden, New Mexico; Fresno, California; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Chicago, Illinois.

The case studies in this report explore the ways districts center MLs in their decision making and illustrate how the levers of learning acceleration can catalyze learning for multilingual learners—at scale.

Throughout, we uplift district efforts that demonstrate a clear lens and integrated approach to supporting these students and demonstrate how other schools and systems might also apply them to fully support their MLs.

We came away with four recommended actions:

- Explicitly target and prioritize multilingual learners in the vision for student success.
- Prioritize and create systems to authentically engage with, collect feedback from, and leverage the expertise of community voices across language and culture.
- Develop educators who have an asset-based approach to students' multiple identities, including cultural and linguistic identities, and who are equipped with strategies to integrate language and content instruction.
- Implement systems that collect key data on multilingual learners and make data easily accessible for educators and communities.

For too long, our multilingual learners have been neglected and relegated to the back of the classroom due to outdated approaches that have not accounted for the demographic shifts in our country's classrooms. This has resulted in schools and districts providing limited access to the four critical resources essential for student learning: grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and teachers with high expectations. Far too many systems still lag in centering students furthest removed from opportunity.

TNTP recognizes the importance of concrete and practical examples for district and school leaders seeking ways to better support MLs and their academic growth and achievement. Through these case studies focused on each of the six levers, we hope to support education systems in unlocking new ways to catalyze learning and advancement for multilingual learners.

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# Multilingual Learners

Multilingual learners are our country's fastest-growing student population: One in five students speak a language other than English at home,<sup>1</sup> and 10 percent of the student population across the country is identified for language development services in school.<sup>2</sup>

Despite these students' growing presence nationwide, relatively few best practices and model policies are being scaled to serve them. In fact, MLs often experience a chronic lack of access to four resources essential to meeting college and career readiness standards: high-quality instructional materials aligned with grade-level standards;<sup>3</sup> teachers and systems equipped to deliver

strong instruction;<sup>4</sup> educators who hold high expectations;<sup>5</sup> and culturally and linguistically sustaining instruction that supports deep engagement.<sup>6</sup> These systemic inequities result in lower educational outcomes, including, most concerning, disparities in high school graduation rates, which can derail access to economic and social mobility.<sup>7</sup>

Data shows that with the right supports, including those that leverage community assets and sustain students' home language toward the goal of bilingualism and biliteracy,<sup>8</sup> MLs can attain outcomes on par with their native English-speaking peers.



## Why we chose the term “multilingual learner”

“Multilingual learner” is preferred over other variations used to describe students who need language development support. While such students are recognized federally as “English learners,” this term focuses on achieving English monolingualism as the ultimate objective, overlooking students' linguistic potential in the classroom. In contrast, “multilingual learner” is an empowering term that values the languages students use at home, recognizes their strengths, and celebrates linguistic diversity and multilingualism as an asset.

<sup>1</sup>“Children Who Speak a Language Other Than English at Home,” Census 2002–2019, 2021 American Community Survey. Accessed April 30, 2023 via Kids Count Data Center, <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/81-children-who-speak-a-language-other-than-english-at-home?loc=1&loct=1#detailed/1/any/false/2048,869/any/396,397>

<sup>2</sup>The Department of Education, English Learners: Demographic Trends (Washington, D.C.: Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), 2022). [https://ncela.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/ELDemographics\\_20220805\\_508.pdf](https://ncela.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/ELDemographics_20220805_508.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>TNTP. (2018). “The Opportunity Myth: What Students Can Show Us About How School Is Letting Them Down—and How to Fix It”. <https://tntp.org/publication/the-opportunity-myth/>

<sup>4</sup>Gonzales, C., & Skarin, R. (2019). “Do Your Materials Meet English Learners' Needs?” *The Learning Professional*, 40(2), 62-70. <https://learningforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/do-your-materials-measure-up.pdf>

<sup>5</sup>Wynn, L., & Zahner, W. (Sept 2022). “Raising Teachers' Voices: What Do Teachers Say About How Well Their Instructional Materials Support English Learners?” *English Learners Success Forum (ELSF)*. [https://assets-global.website-files.com/5b43fc97fc4773f14ee92f3/63358e8c10af0cdbc4384b03\\_Raising-Teachers-Voices-Whitepaper-05.pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/5b43fc97fc4773f14ee92f3/63358e8c10af0cdbc4384b03_Raising-Teachers-Voices-Whitepaper-05.pdf)

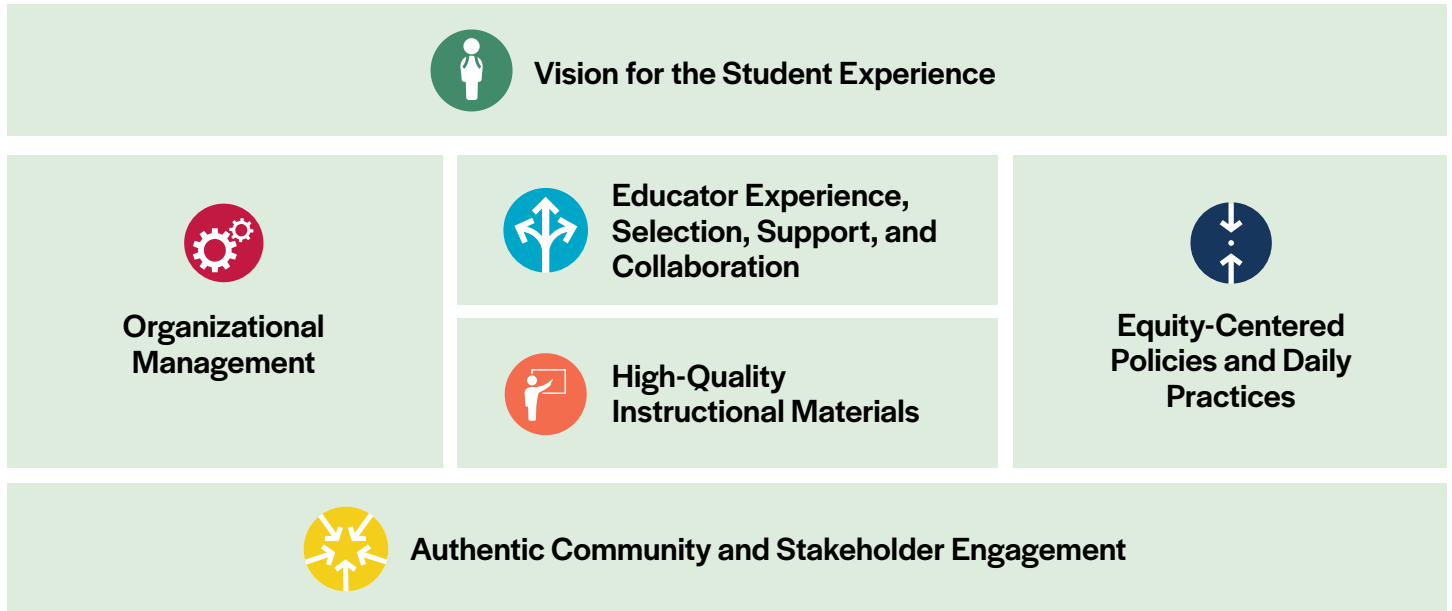
<sup>6</sup>Blaha, K. (Feb 2022). “Foundations of Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching.” *EduTopia*. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/foundations-culturally-and-linguistically-responsive-teaching/>

<sup>7</sup>U.S. Department of Education, Office of the English Language Acquisition, Adolescent and Adult English Learners: National Profile of Educational and Employment Barriers and Opportunities, Washington, D.C., 2019. <https://ncela.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/A%20National%20Profile%20of%20Educational%20and%20Employment%20Barriers%20and%20Opportunities.pdf>

<sup>8</sup>Collier, V.P., & Thomas, W.P. (2017). “Validating the Power of Bilingual Schooling: Thirty-Two Years of Large-Scale, Longitudinal Research.” *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 37, 1-15. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d854ac170e64a71d1de71d3/t/5d9cb55f26d64b44562c6069/157055181085/ARAL+2017+%28typed%29.PDF>

# Six Levers of Learning Acceleration in Action

TNTP's six levers of learning acceleration are critical to a successful academic experience. Learning acceleration<sup>9</sup> is a strategy to support students by providing grade-level work with appropriate supports, rather than remediation, which delays access to grade-level work. For multilingual students, who have traditionally been furthest from opportunity, operating these levers often calls for intentionality and focus to overcome long-standing disparities.



## Why These Six Levers?

In TNTP's 2018 national report "The Opportunity Myth," we found that far too often, students do not have access to four key resources they need to thrive: grade-level work, strong instruction, deep engagement, and teachers with high expectations. Moreover, multilingual learners have even less access to these resources.<sup>10</sup> More recent TNTP research has shown that learning acceleration—providing students with access to grade-level assignments while integrating just-in-time lessons from prior years—is more effective than remediation.<sup>11</sup> To ensure all students are getting access to high-quality, grade-level instruction, school systems must do more than just implement the right curriculum; systems must recruit, retain, and support educators who hold

high expectations for their students;<sup>12</sup> establish a vision for the student experience and achieve it through strong organizational management and authentic engagement with families and community members; and center equity in the system's approach to setting policy and practices. Based on our research and 26 years of work in the field, we hypothesize that school systems tapping these six levers in concert have a much better chance of providing all students with the instruction they need to achieve their academic and career goals.<sup>13</sup> Though the showcased districts demonstrate attention to several or all of these levers, each case study in this report highlights one specific lever in action centering MLs.

<sup>9</sup> TNTP. (2021). "Learning Acceleration for All: Planning for the Next Three to Five Years". [https://tntp.org/assets/covid-19-toolkit-resources/Learning\\_Acceleration\\_for\\_All\\_2021.pdf](https://tntp.org/assets/covid-19-toolkit-resources/Learning_Acceleration_for_All_2021.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> TNTP. (2018). "The Opportunity Myth: What Students Can Show Us About How School Is Letting Them Down—and How to Fix It".

<https://tntp.org/publication/the-opportunity-myth/>

<sup>11</sup> TNTP. (2022). "Unlocking Acceleration: How Below Grade-Level Work Is Holding Students Back in Literacy". <https://tntp.org/publication/unlocking-acceleration/>; TNTP. (2021) Accelerate, Don't Remediate: New Evidence from Elementary Math Classrooms. <https://tntp.org/publication/accelerate-dont-remediate/>

<sup>12</sup> TNTP. (2018). "The Opportunity Myth: What Students Can Show Us About How School Is Letting Them Down—and How to Fix It".

<https://tntp.org/publication/the-opportunity-myth/>

<sup>13</sup> TNTP. (2021). "Learning Acceleration for All: Planning for the Next Three to Five Years". [https://tntp.org/assets/covid-19-toolkit-resources/Learning\\_Acceleration\\_for\\_All\\_2021.pdf](https://tntp.org/assets/covid-19-toolkit-resources/Learning_Acceleration_for_All_2021.pdf)



## Vision for the Student Experience

The school system envisions, articulates, and enacts the academic and cultural experience it expects all students to have. The vision centers on students who have historically been furthest from access to high-quality learning experiences. Leaders regularly measure the effectiveness and impact of the articulated vision.

**In Action:** Gadsden Independent School District is expanding dual-language immersion with the goal of increasing biliteracy for all students, while holistically supporting the social-emotional needs of their MLs in a culturally responsive way.



## Authentic Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The education system builds and maintains the relationships among students, staff, families, caregivers, and community members. Officials share data and knowledge and are responsive to the information that stakeholders need to engage fully in instruction, strategy, design, and implementation.

**In Action:** Fresno Unified School District partners with Fresno State University and the Education and Leadership Foundation to hire Inter-Act Fellows, bilingual college students pursuing a degree in education, to support experienced MLs<sup>14</sup> and sustain rapport between students, caregivers, and school staff.



## Organizational Management

The education system uses change management and continuous improvement processes to improve student and staff experiences and maintain focus on existing or emerging disparities within the system. This lever is the conduit between vision and the community, increasing efficiencies, ensuring efficacy and equity, and mobilizing capacity in efficient and strategic ways.

**In Action:** Surry County Schools in North Carolina planned strategically for the long-term sustainability of ESSER-funded positions to ensure a decreased teacher–ML student ratio and increased service time across schools.



## Equity-Centered Policies and Daily Practices

The system’s policies and daily practices build trust in its ability to provide strong, equitable instruction. The policies and practices actively attend to the barriers that interrupt student success and generate disparities.

**In Action:** Chicago Public Schools systemically leverages the voices of ML caregivers and parents through bilingual parent advisory committees and the Chicago Multilingual Parent Council, giving them a seat at the table for budgetary decisions affecting MLs.



## Educator Experience, Selection, Support, and Collaboration

The system has articulated a desired educator experience with clear expectations. It builds and supports workforce capacity to improve practice and ensures retention of the most vital educators. Administrators recruit and select educators who reflect the community they serve.

**In Action:** Tulsa Public Schools’ Teacher Corps supports recruiting, selecting, and preparing local teacher candidates to support MLs, including in the district’s expansive dual-language programs.



## High-Quality Instructional Materials

The resources and materials used by the education system are high-quality and attend to the needs of all learners—specifically, MLs, students with learning and thinking differences, and populations that have historically experienced over-remediation or unfinished instruction. The system measures how educators implement these resources and how students engage with them.

**In Action:** Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools has developed the Personalized Academic Command of English (P.A.C.E.) framework to accompany high-quality core curricula used across the district and ensure MLs are supported in accessing grade-level standards and instruction.

<sup>14</sup> “Experienced multilingual learners” is an asset-based term for students typically referred to as long-term English learners.



# Gadsden ISD's Expansion of Dual-Language Immersion and Social-Emotional Supports

## Gadsden Independent School District, New Mexico



**13,200 students,**<sup>15</sup>  
**42% Multilingual Learners**



**24 schools**<sup>16</sup>



### Planned Intervention

Expanding dual-language immersion along with comprehensive interventions encompassing academic and social-emotional support for MLs



### Initiative's Funding Source

ESSER, Title IV

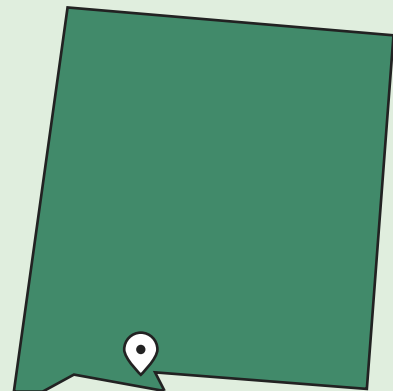


## New Mexico's Multilingual Learner Population

**49,497** MLs or **16%** of the total population in 2020, about the same as 2010, when MLs totaled **52,557** or **16.1%**<sup>17</sup>

Percentage of grade 4 students scoring at or above Proficient in New Mexico, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2022 Reading Assessment<sup>18</sup>

ML: **7%** vs. Not ML: **25%**



<sup>15</sup> Gadsden Independent School District. (2023). Retrieved April 28, 2023, from [https://gisd.k12.nm.us/53361\\_1](https://gisd.k12.nm.us/53361_1)

<sup>16</sup> Gadsden Independent School District. (2023).

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). Table 204.20. English learner (EL) students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, by state: Selected years, fall 2000 through fall 2020. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22\\_204.20.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22_204.20.asp)

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2022 Reading Assessment.



## Case Study Vision for the Student Experience

Gadsden ISD engaged in a strategic planning process beginning in 2021 to address the impact of the pandemic on the district and drive students toward improved outcomes. The district is rural, close to the U.S.-Mexico border, and every year welcomes around 400 newcomer students, who make up almost a tenth of their multilingual learner population. District leaders work together to implement their three-part vision for the student experience:

- Students access the supports they need to thrive.
- Families choose a language program model that best fits their needs.
- Teachers are supported with professional development and growth opportunities to enable the district to retain strong educators and meet students' needs.

The vision for the student experience at Gadsden ISD is becoming a reality thanks to a team effort at the district central office. Rather than the information silos that often segment communication and collaboration structures in local and state education agencies, Gadsden ISD has a tight-knit group of colleagues who are deeply involved in each other's work and are pulling together toward the same goal. The Chief Academic Officer brings together directors from each department in weekly meetings where they reflect on student improvement data and assess their progress toward the district's strategic plan goals. The superintendent and school board have also been avid supporters of the district's move toward bilingualism and expanding dual-language immersion. As district bilingual specialist Esmeralda Sanxter reflected, "We are all language teachers. There isn't a boundary, as far as who do we work with and who do we talk to, to make sure our kids are getting the best."

With the goal of increasing biliteracy across the district, leaders have been investing in efforts to expand the district's two-way dual-language immersion programs to accommodate as many of their students as possible. Over half of Gadsden ISD's schools offer two-way dual-language programs, including 11 elementary, 2 middle, and 1 high school. To expand dual-language programs to more schools, the district is increasing its capacity by supporting teachers seeking their bilingual and TESOL endorsements. The district allocated a portion of ESSER funds to reimburse teachers for the cost of completing needed coursework. In addition, the district partnered with two universities to set up virtual and satellite classes to make it easier for district teachers to complete the requirement.

**"The goal is not just 'teach English.' The goal really is for [students] to maintain and become biliterate in both languages."**

—Nubia Tarazona, Director of Language, Equity, and Cultural Arts

In addition to expanding dual-language programs and developing the teachers needed to staff them, the district has also prioritized the social-emotional and mental health needs of its multilingual students. Gadsden ISD hired mental health counselors for each of the district's three high schools and ensured those counselors were equipped to support MLs. Notably, Gadsden ISD sought these critical hires locally—the three counselors were not only bilingual but also graduates from Gadsden ISD; one is a former migrant student who now serves the many migrant families in the district. "They understand the community because they are from the community," affirmed Rosy Villalobos, the district's federal grants manager. The district is committed to ensuring that the staff in schools reflect and value the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students and are equipped with the credentials, expertise, and professional development to serve all MLs.

### Key Takeaway

**Setting a strategic vision to improve outcomes for MLs is essential for streamlining efforts across multiple stakeholders. Gadsden ISD's approach could be a model for other districts seeking to comprehensively support their ML students as individuals while pushing for greater academic outcomes districtwide.**





### Engaging Key Stakeholders in Decision Making

District leaders conducted a comprehensive needs assessment at meetings held in each of the different regions of the rural district to inform the development of their strategic plan. Then, during the process of planning for ESSER funds, they hosted many virtual meetings with stakeholders across their community, including parents and caregivers, directors, instructional coaches, teachers, and more. The message was, “Send us your proposals.’ We were listening to everybody,” said Villalobos.

### Implementation

In launching the bilingual and TESOL endorsement supports for teachers, Gadsden ISD grappled with low interest from (and incentive for) teachers. The district wrestled with a relic of the perception that bilingual/TESOL-endorsed teaching is “double the work,” from a time when bilingual educators did a lot of translating of curricula and materials. However, the district now provides a curriculum in both Spanish and English, and the tedious task of translating resources is not a part of the job description anymore. Further, while the district historically provided a small annual stipend to teachers with bilingual/ TESOL endorsements, the stipend is smaller than in neighboring districts and has remained stagnant for over a decade. To address this, district staff have proposed a stipend increase to their local school board, which is elevating it to the New Mexico School Superintendents Association so that those teachers with a TESOL or bilingual endorsement can get more fairly compensated for the additional time and work that goes into those teaching roles.

### Impact

One measure of the district’s progress toward increasing biliteracy is the number of graduating students who attain the State Seal of Bilingualism-Biliteracy, a recognition of fluency in a language other than English that students can achieve by completing a combination of credits, assessments, and/or a portfolio. District leaders have shared a consistent message about the benefits of bilingualism and pursuing the Seal of Biliteracy with families and students, and as a result, the number of Gadsden students attaining the Seal of Biliteracy has grown from 22 in 2016 to 81 in 2023.

### What Comes Next

District leaders hope to continue growing the dual-language model in more schools and more grade levels. They also see an opportunity to develop a language-related career pathway for secondary students, allowing MLs to begin training for job opportunities as translators, interpreters, bilingual educators, and other in-demand careers.



# Surry County’s Plan for Long-Term Sustainability of ESSER-Funded Positions

## Surry County Schools, North Carolina



**7,081 students,<sup>19</sup>**  
**11.7% Multilingual Learners**



**20 schools<sup>20</sup>**



### Planned Intervention

Hiring additional ML staff to reduce the student-teacher ratio for MLs from 1:95 to 1:53



### Initiative’s Funding Source

ESSER, Title III, Title IV

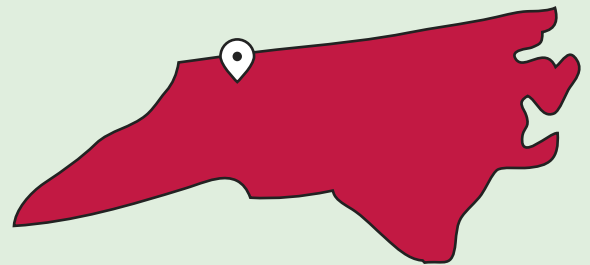


## North Carolina’s Multilingual Learner Population

**114,901** MLs or **7.7%** of the total student population in 2020, about the same as 2010, when MLs totaled **103,249** or **7.5%**<sup>21</sup>

Percentage of grade 4 students scoring at or above Proficient in North Carolina, according to the NAEP 2022 Reading Assessment<sup>22</sup>

ML: **9%** vs. Not ML: **35%**



<sup>19</sup> Surry County Schools. 2020-2021 Annual Report. [https://www.surry.k12.nc.us/cms/lib/NC02213605/Centricity/Domain/1988/2021-Surry-Couty-Schools\\_8.5x11\\_page\\_v3.pdf](https://www.surry.k12.nc.us/cms/lib/NC02213605/Centricity/Domain/1988/2021-Surry-Couty-Schools_8.5x11_page_v3.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Surry County Schools. 2020-2021 Annual Report.

<sup>21</sup> National Center for Education Statistics (2022).

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2022 Reading Assessment.



Surry County Schools has a sustainable, strategic funding approach that ensures investments targeting MLs increase equity in resource allocation, including student access to ML specialists. Its strategic plan guides its use of funds and incorporates regular assessments of the funding's impact, to maintain the effective use of its investments.<sup>23</sup>

In 2021, the district added four staff members to its ML team to address the need for additional support for multilingual learners given the pandemic's impact. The district was able to bring on additional capacity with federal ESSER funds. But district leaders, including LuAnne Llewellyn, who serves as Surry County Schools' Director of Federal Programs, recognized that relying primarily on ESSER funding for this additional support would make it hard to sustain long-term. To prepare for this, Llewellyn's office transitioned the source of funding for those positions away from ESSER III to other ongoing annual funding streams, like federal Title III and Title IV funds.<sup>24</sup>

Beyond adding staff capacity to support MLs, the district focused on spending one-time dollars like ESSER I, II, and III on "strategies and models that can continue on after that person's gone," Llewellyn emphasized. "I don't spend my money on programs, because a program is for a year, and it's gone." The district offers additional training and a level of support to ML specialists that these teachers might not be likely to find in surrounding districts, which helps ensure the district can retain them. The new ML specialists have been paired with mentor teachers who receive a stipend for this extra responsibility. The district also provides weekly professional development for ML staff, which gets recorded and shared for anyone who misses it or can't attend due to restrictions on their hours. The value placed on mentor teachers and high-quality professional learning demonstrate the district's commitment to its multilingual educators, who are then more likely to stay with the district and better equipped to serve MLs.

The district's approach to planning ahead, projecting how many MLs each school will have in the coming years, ensures that it is staffing schools with enough supports for MLs so that students have equitable access to services at any school within the district. For example, Llewellyn projected that one of the district's high schools would have more than 60 MLs the following year but only one teacher certified to support them. As a result, she funded and placed one of the newly hired ML specialists at that school and advocated for the existing teacher to have one period blocked off for English Language Development.

### Key Takeaway

**Districts can leverage organizational management and sustainably plan ahead to ensure MLs are supported now and in the future. Surry County sets an example for other districts through its utilization of various funding streams and timely planning to ensure new support for MLs will continue after one-time dollars are spent.**

<sup>23</sup>Surry County Schools. Strategic Plan 2019–2023. <https://www.surry.k12.nc.us/page/strategic-plan-2019-2023>

<sup>24</sup>Title III funds may only be used for salaries of those educators providing supplemental language instruction (in extended learning time, for example), not the core instruction that is required under other laws. (Holbrook, D. (2020, November 23). "Can Title III Funds Be Used to Pay Educator Salaries?" <https://www.transact.com/blog/title-iii-funds-pay-educator-salaries>). Title IV funds can be used for salaries of personnel needed to carry out activities that support a well-rounded education, safe and healthy students, or effective use of technology. (New York State Education Department. Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program, Guidance on Allowable and Unallowable Expenditures. [https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/title\\_iv\\_part\\_a\\_allowable\\_expenditures.pdf](https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/title_iv_part_a_allowable_expenditures.pdf)).



### Engaging Key Stakeholders in Decision Making

Surry County uses phone and online surveys in multiple languages to get stakeholder input, particularly from parents, to inform its ML student services and strategy. The district has an open survey that is checked every two weeks for feedback. Having built a good rapport with the community and parents, the district receives high response rates on the survey because it has developed relational trust by acting upon survey feedback consistently. Llewellyn reflected, “Once people learn that you really do care and you will follow through, then they know that you have their backs. When you ask them a question, they respond.”

To ensure parents are aware of how students across the district are performing, the Federal Programs office does an annual deep dive into its data and presents it at a back-to-school event for parents, with breakdowns and disaggregation of data by student populations.

**“Students and their data drive everything that we do at Surry for MLs. Hard data, and anecdotal data, too—the stories behind the children.”**

—LuAnne Llewellyn, Director of Federal Programs

### Implementation

Multilingual specialists have been hard to find in Surry County, a rural district, and are in high demand across this North Carolina region. The district has had to be creative in how it recruits new staff and has dealt with losing staff over the past couple of years. Llewellyn works alongside her team in recruiting and hiring potential candidates.

**“We don’t sit on [our] laurels of what’s happened in the past.”**

—LuAnne Llewellyn, Director of Federal Programs

She has reached out beyond the country’s borders to recruit a candidate in Poland, and she personally participates in all interviews of ML specialists.

With the impacts of pandemic interruptions continuing to be felt, the district has leaned into the opportunity to innovate. It learned the powerful potential of using technology to bridge gaps and address barriers for the benefit of students, teachers, and parents. Using screen casting, in-class teachers get a “virtual co-teacher,” allowing them to provide differentiated instruction through student group rotations.

While the teacher works with small groups, other students work with a recorded instructional video from a specialist. Surry County also uses screen casting to support parent engagement across literacy levels, through short informational videos in caregivers’ native languages.

### Impact

Surry County has been able to lower the student-to-ML specialist ratio by almost half—from 95-to-1 to 53-to-1. As a result, ML students are now getting time with an ML specialist five days a week, for at least 40 minutes per session, up from two to three times per week. Though still nascent, the extra support is yielding results. Compared to North Carolina’s overall ML population, a higher proportion of Surry’s MLs consistently demonstrate grade-level proficiency in both reading and math and a higher proportion also made progress toward English language proficiency in 2022 (25 percent compared to the state’s 22 percent).

Further, its emphasis on training and support has helped the district retain staff despite neighboring districts’ recruitment efforts.

### What Comes Next

The district would like to increase the amount of training offered to ML staff, from organizations such as the Orange County Department of Education Project GLAD® (Guided Language Acquisition Design) and Blended Learning.

Building on the success of its ML approach, the district continues to plan ahead to ensure staffing meets the needs of the district. Beyond looking only at recruitment, it is also focusing on retention and capacity building through mentoring and professional development to ensure ML specialists can grow in their careers, whether in the classroom, as lead teachers, or in the central office.



# Chicago Public Schools’ Bilingual Advisory Committees and Chicago Multilingual Parent Council

## Chicago Public Schools, Illinois



**322,106 students,**  
**22.4% Multilingual Learners<sup>25</sup>**



**635 schools<sup>26</sup>**



### Planned Intervention

Parent and caregiver councils: school-level  
Bilingual Advisory Committees and district-level  
Chicago Multilingual Parent Council



### Initiative’s Funding Source

Title III, approximately \$1 million each year



## Illinois’s Multilingual Learner Population

**218,480** MLs or **12%** of the total student population in 2020, an increase from 2010 when MLs totaled **174,340** or **8.3%**<sup>27</sup>

Percentage of grade 4 students scoring at or above Proficient in Illinois, according to the NAEP 2022 Reading Assessment<sup>28</sup>

ML: **13%** vs. Not ML: **39%**



<sup>25</sup> Chicago Public Schools. (2023). Stats and Facts. Retrieved April 28, 2023, from <https://www.cps.edu/about/stats-facts/>

<sup>26</sup> Chicago Public Schools. (2023).

<sup>27</sup> National Center for Education Statistics (2022).

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2022 Reading Assessment.



## Case Study Equity-Centered Policies and Daily Practices

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) leverages parent voices in an empowering and impactful way to support multilingual learners and their families. While all schools are required to ensure language access to support the participation of MLs and their caregivers,<sup>29</sup> CPS has districtwide structures to move beyond compliance and build relational trust to encourage and maintain parent engagement. The district has school-level bilingual advisory committees (BACs) comprised of caregivers in any school with more than 20 MLs. The Office of Language and Cultural Education (OLCE) staff ensures that the committees meet regularly and work hand in hand with the BACs to ensure that the district is responsive to the parents and caregivers of multilingual learners. By supporting ML parent leadership, CPS can stay attuned to and address barriers to access for families. At the district level, the Chicago Multilingual Parent Council (CMPC), made up of elected parents and caregivers from each region of the city, is responsible for doing Title III grant reviews and sharing parent feedback. Before quarterly parent meetings, OLCE leadership meets with the CMPC to gather input and set the agenda for broader parent meetings.

This systemic approach allows CPS to be engaged with the community and responsive to ML needs. As the district planned for how to use ESSER funds, there was already a process for involving the caregivers of MLs beyond the traditional practices of school board or PTA meetings, which can often be exclusionary for those stakeholders. ESSER fund usage was put on CMPC meeting agendas, and parents spoke about the need for tutoring for MLs. While such a program existed, not all students who needed the support were being reached. As a result of caregiver advocacy, the tutoring program for MLs was able to utilize ESSER funds to reach twice the number of schools.

**“The citywide group said, ‘These are things we want to see more of,’ and I presented a plan for how to do it.”**

—Jorge Macias, Former Chief of Language and Cultural Education

The OLCE is instrumental to making parent outreach and inclusion in CPS a success. The office is run by a small staff and is tasked with supporting more than 70,000 MLs across the district, so the staff have built key structures to strategically leverage their resources and expand their reach to the families they serve. The OLCE frequently engages with caregivers through multiple regional training sessions to provide targeted support for students’ well-being and academic outcomes, and through quarterly citywide meetings. Additionally, the OLCE hosts an annual caregiver meeting to hear from families directly and share the office’s learnings transparently. This comprehensive engagement structure allows the district to communicate clearly and build trust with the caregiver community. Macias reflected, “When parents feel that level of access and their voices are being heard, even if not everything gets accomplished, but at least they know that people are listening, and there’s a structure ... and there’s dialogue, they’re more engaged.” The OLCE has gone beyond compliance to truly authentic engagement with Chicago’s ML parents and caregivers.

### Key Takeaway

**Education leaders could establish the infrastructure for multilingual parent engagement through school- and district-level councils and invest in training so all caregivers are equipped to be impactful advocates. CPS exemplifies how a district can empower and learn from the expertise in its ML parent community.**

<sup>29</sup> Federal law gives the caregivers of multilingual learners the right to access information about their child’s education in a language they understand. Translation and interpretation must be provided by appropriate individuals who have been trained to provide these services. Relying on students, siblings, friends, or untrained school staff for translations and interpretation is out of compliance with federal law. It is critical that all LEAs and CMOs comply with this federal requirement to ensure equitable access for their multilingual learners. When schools or districts are not meeting this demand, a complaint can be filed with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR). Districts may come under consent decree from the Department of Justice, requiring them to submit plans for improvement with close oversight from the OCR. (U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) Information for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Parents and Guardians and for Schools and School Districts that Communicate with Them. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-lep-parents-201501.pdf>)



### Engaging Key Stakeholders in Decision Making

The bilingual advisory committees are a state requirement for schools with a transitional bilingual education program.<sup>30</sup> But CPS has moved beyond just compliance. The training it offers each year is fully informed by feedback received each summer from parents. This feedback is used to plan the themes for the following year's training.

### Implementation

It takes parents and caregivers time to develop a comfort level with advocacy work for their children. While the district has strong engagement from Spanish, Arabic, and Mandarin-speaking parents, there has been a smaller presence from parents speaking other languages. In some cases, caregivers are refugees going through the process of acculturation, and stepping outside their immediate community might be daunting. Getting to advocacy involves breaking down cultural barriers between what caregivers are familiar with in their home country's education system and the expectations and opportunities within the U.S. education system.

The OLCE's parent advocacy team works to mitigate these engagement barriers through a number of efforts, including regularly reviewing data to explore root causes of lower engagement by subgroups of parents, setting clear goals and expectations for establishing bilingual advisory committees, implementing various incentives to increase parent engagement in its existing structures, and surveying parents often. The team also recognizes that every year presents a new opportunity to engage a new set of parents with an incoming kindergarten class and a newly elected committee.

### Impact

Several years ago, when the district considered reallocating Title III funds without going through the proper budget review process with stakeholders, the CMPC stepped in. They lobbied the school board and the CEO and succeeded in getting the budget plan changed. CMPC meetings have become one of the most reliable ways for the district to get in front of a large group of parents, as they regularly have 300 to 400 parents from more than 100 different schools attending. Now, when the district is considering policy changes, district staff use the structure and systems in place to get parent input: They ask the CMPC if they can present at an upcoming parent meeting. This reflects a powerful shift from parents needing to "get loud" to have their voices heard to being a valued audience that the district seeks out deliberately.

### What Comes Next

The Office of Language and Cultural Education is always working to see more schools represented at regional trainings and districtwide parent meetings. No specific changes are planned, but the office is focused on constant improvement in engagement and representation. The OLCE parent advocacy team are held accountable for reaching parent engagement goals, and they work collectively to problem-solve when they are not reaching their targets, identifying barriers to participation and approaches that have worked in other schools.

<sup>30</sup> Illinois Compiled Statutes, School Code, Article 14C Transitional Bilingual Education. (105 ILCS 5/14C-10) <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/documents/010500050K14C-10.htm>



# Fresno Unified’s Inter-Act Fellows Program

## Fresno Unified School District, California



**73,249 students,**  
**19% Multilingual Learners<sup>31</sup>**



**104 schools<sup>32</sup>**



### Planned Intervention

Expansion of Inter-Act Fellows program from 12 bilingual fellows to 50, with a focus on experienced MLs (asset-based terminology for the more commonly recognized long-term English learners).



**Initiative’s Funding Source**  
 ESSER



## California’s Multilingual Learner Population

**1,062,264** MLs or **17.7%** of the total student population in 2020, a decrease from 2010 when MLs totaled **1,474,250** or **23.3%**<sup>33</sup>

Percentage of grade 4 students scoring at or above Proficient in California, according to the NAEP 2022 Reading Assessment<sup>34</sup>

ML: **8%** vs. Not ML: **39%**



<sup>31</sup>Fresno Unified School District. (2019). English Learner Services Fact Sheet. <https://els.fresnounified.org/wp-content/uploads/EL-Fact-Sheet-4-19.pdf>

<sup>32</sup>Fresno Unified School District. (2023). School Directory. Retrieved April 28, 2023, from <https://schools.fresnounified.org/>

<sup>33</sup>National Center for Education Statistics (2022).

<sup>34</sup>U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2022 Reading Assessment.





## Case Study Authentic Community And Stakeholder Engagement

Fresno Unified School District (FUSD)'s efforts exemplify deep engagement with community members, particularly those representing the needs of MLs. The district uses the structures of English Learner Advisory Committees at the school and district level, as well as survey tools like ThoughtExchange, to regularly seek input and advice from parents, families, teachers, and students.<sup>35</sup> Its partnership with Fresno State University to provide bilingual college students interested in teaching with tutoring positions at high-need elementary schools demonstrates a recognition of the assets present in the community and the mutual benefit of engaging in such an impactful program.

FUSD's partnership with Fresno State University on the Inter-Act Fellowship allows the district to offer additional support through extended learning time to experienced MLs, in the hopes of reclassifying students before they enter secondary school. The district has used ESSER funds to expand the reach of Inter-Act Fellows from fourth, fifth, and sixth grades to now include kindergarten in early intervention. Inter-Act Fellows work in the 50 schools with the highest percentages of experienced MLs. In addition to working directly with students after school, fellows connect with families in their native language to discuss their children's academic progress and ways they can support the child at home with their learning. Inter-Act Fellows also play a role in supporting FUSD's multilingual learner peer mentoring program. The high school program pairs reclassified MLs with newcomer students or experienced MLs who speak the same home language to offer conversation practice and help with navigating the school's culture and academics. Fellows staff the after-school mentoring sessions and are additional near-peer role models for Fresno's multilingual learners.

**“We remind teachers that it’s your mindset, it’s seeing that the kids come to school with lots of knowledge and lots of assets already from their community, from their language, and from their culture, and that’s the lens that we need to look at.”**

—Doua Vu, Manager of Hmong Language Immersion Program

### Key Takeaway

**Education agencies should consistently provide opportunities for MLs and the caregivers, communities, and educators who support them to engage as active partners in students’ educational journeys. FUSD’s Inter-Act Fellows program demonstrates how districts can create partnerships with the community to broaden effective support for MLs while also building the pipeline for bilingual educators.**

<sup>35</sup>ThoughtExchange is a community engagement tool that allows for quick analysis of both quantitative and qualitative survey responses. It helps education systems gather confidential input from students, caregivers, teachers, and other stakeholders in over 133 languages, and respondents can participate on a variety of devices.



## Case Study

# Authentic Community And Stakeholder Engagement

### Engaging Key Stakeholders in Decision Making

The expansion of the Inter-Act Fellows Program came as a response to surveys and feedback gathered from teachers and families. Through ThoughtExchange, the district surveyed the community in multiple languages, reaching caregivers and staff via phone and online. The district also tapped into several existing structures to strategically expand its community engagement. For example, the district held meetings run through California's Local Control and Accountability Plan and the District English Learner Advisory Council and ensured supports like childcare and food were offered at the meetings to increase family attendance and engagement.

Tutoring was one of the top concerns for caregivers of MLs. The expansion of the Inter-Act Fellows program meets this need by providing bilingual tutors to the highest-need elementary schools. FUSD also acquired a districtwide license to tutor.com, which provides access to credentialed teachers who are available 24/7; the English Learner Services Department worked with the platform to add teachers who were credentialed and fluent in other languages (beyond English, Hmong, and Spanish) so that it was accessible for all their MLs.

### Implementation

FUSD previously worked with a teaching fellows program, but in 2018, the district moved to the Inter-Act Fellows program because it enabled the district to require all fellows to be bilingual and match the language needs of their families. It also allowed the district more flexibility in how to train the fellows, using its own district staff and customizing the preparation so that fellows are oriented to the district and prepared to meet the needs of students learning English.

### Impact

By leveraging students' and families' home language, Inter-Act Fellows can sustain student engagement and attendance in the after-school sessions. Students and families responded positively to the support received from Inter-Act Fellows and the social connection in the after-school sessions. Some students even continue coming for homework support and structured time with a supportive adult after they have reached the goal of reclassifying out of English language development services and no longer need to attend.

The Inter-Act Fellows program also helps the district attract, recruit, and retain promising multilingual talent. Many Inter-Act Fellows go on to become teachers and get hired by the district. They have the advantage of being bilingual, knowing the district, and knowing the specific school where they tutored while in college. The program thus offers two major benefits: supporting the students who are in the after-school program, and developing the fellows as they progress toward becoming teachers especially equipped to serve the district's MLs.

### What Comes Next

FUSD would like to expand the fellows program at the secondary level and place at least two fellows per school. Doing so would enable them to have one fellow helping during the day with newcomers and then another to help with peer mentoring and tutoring after school.

In addition to engaging with a university partner to tap into the local bilingual college student community, FUSD recognizes the assets that are its own students. Through their dual-language immersion program at the secondary level, students can pursue career pathways that value their multilingualism. One pathway develops high school students interested in teaching so they can enter a paraeducator training program when they graduate, and eventually become bilingual educators. Sandra Toscano, Instructional Superintendent, reflected on this multigenerational approach: "We feel very strongly that we have to grow our students into being professionals in our district. We're calling it the boomerang: We're preparing them so they can go to college, so they can come back." The district values and invests in multilingual students, families, and community partners to both support current students and build a pipeline of future teachers who reflect and value the MLs in the Fresno community.



# Tulsa Public Schools’ Development of Culturally and Linguistically Representative Educators

## Tulsa Public Schools, Oklahoma



**33,873 students,**  
**36% Multilingual Learners** (including both current and former MLs)<sup>36</sup>



**78 schools** (including “charter partners”)<sup>37</sup>



### Planned Intervention

Tulsa Teacher Corps—Recruit and support diverse, multilingual educators prepared to teach multilingual learners



### Initiative’s Funding Source

Philanthropic support

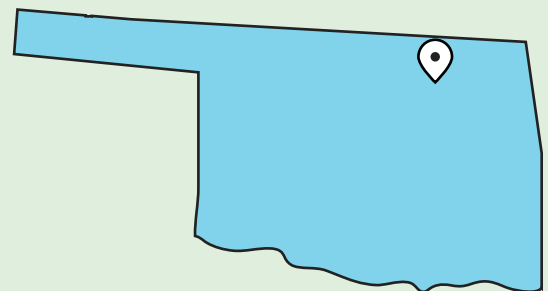


## Oklahoma’s Multilingual Learner Population

**60,282 MLs** or **9.3%** of the total student population in 2020, an increase from 2010 when MLs totaled **41,812** or **6.6%**<sup>38</sup>

Percentage of grade 4 students scoring at or above Proficient in Oklahoma, according to the NAEP 2022 Reading Assessment<sup>39</sup>

ML: **9%** vs. Not ML: **26%**



<sup>36</sup> Tulsa Public Schools. (2023). Retrieved April 28, 2023, from <https://www.tulsaschools.org/about>

<sup>37</sup> Tulsa Public Schools. (2023).

<sup>38</sup> National Center for Education Statistics (2022).

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2022 Reading Assessment.



## Case Study

# Educator Experience, Selection, Support, and Collaboration

Tulsa Public Schools is working to ensure that a diverse group of teachers lead its classrooms, which includes intentionality in recruiting an educator workforce reflective of Tulsa’s cultural and linguistic diversity. The Department of Educator Effectiveness and the Department of Language and Cultural Services work in tandem to achieve teacher recruitment goals in a way that reflects their student population. The Tulsa Teacher Corps is an essential part of that recruitment strategy, as the program brings in people who hadn’t considered teaching as a profession, including career changers, paraprofessionals, and community members. It also removes common barriers to teaching by providing training at no cost and supporting new teachers with mentoring and coaching.

With 11 schools implementing dual-language programs throughout Tulsa Public Schools, there is a significant need for bilingual teachers. Oklahoma does not have any identified educator preparation programs or certification pathways specifically for dual-language teachers, so the district has gotten creative in how it recruits and sources new bilingual teachers to equip them to teach within the district’s dual-language models. The district’s primary source of Spanish-speaking teachers for the dual-language programs has come through a memorandum of understanding with the Embassy of Spain. On average, teachers recruited through this arrangement spend three to five years with the district, so building up the local recruitment of Spanish-speaking teachers has been important for ensuring the long-term retention of dual-language teachers.

### **“If you’re local, you’re more likely to stay.”**

—Laura Grisso, Executive Director of Language and Cultural Services

District staff think outside the box to recruit new teachers and eliminate barriers to the profession. For example, when Tulsa Teacher Corps staff learned of a local company laying off 1,000 workers, they saw an opportunity to recruit potential teacher candidates, anticipating that some of these workers might be interested in a career change. Additionally, the Department of Language and Cultural Services formed strong relationships with local, linguistically diverse communities, including Tulsa’s Spanish-speaking Latinx community and the fast-growing Micronesian Chuukese-speaking population, to actively recruit teacher candidates that have the linguistic and cultural background to better connect with Tulsa’s student population.

The potential these teacher candidates see in supporting dual-language programs speaks to them because “that’s such a core piece of self. To see that people have the opportunity to use part of who they are to support other students; it touches people. ... They get very excited about the possibility there,” commented Grisso. The district also worked to broaden the pathway to teacher certification for bilingual teacher candidates by partnering with the Oklahoma State Department, the College Board, and Puerto Rico to ensure that the Prueba para la Certificación de Maestros (PCMAS),<sup>40</sup> which can be taken in Spanish, satisfies the requirement for teacher certification in Oklahoma.

Tulsa Teacher Corps members have become the second-largest source of Spanish bilingual teachers for the district. The program has placed an increasing number of teachers in dual-language classrooms each year, starting with two in 2018 and expanding to 23 dual-language placements in 2022. Beyond an ability to speak Spanish, dual-language teachers trained through Tulsa Teacher Corps bring a diversity of backgrounds that position them to connect with Tulsa students and families, many of whom have linguistic and cultural backgrounds rooted in Mexico and Central American countries. They do not have to experience the learning curve or cultural adjustment required of teachers from Spain: “As we’re building our muscle in recruiting our dual-language teachers through Corps, we find that we can recruit and develop teachers who maybe have more similar regional language dialects and cultural understandings, and that has made a huge impact, and in some ways, some of them are notably more successful just because they are bringing different skills and strengths to the classroom,” reflected Grisso.

In addition to recruitment, Tulsa Public Schools focuses on supporting its teachers through training and mentorship. Specifically for bilingual dual-language teachers, the Department of Language and Cultural Services developed extensive dual-language training called the “Tulsa Way for Dual Language” in the absence of any required bilingual or dual-language certification in the state. It also provides a specific dual-language mentor for dual-language teachers. In addition, Tulsa Teacher Corps members work with an instructional mentor for two full years and are supported with stipends for the additional work they are doing during the summer program.

<sup>40</sup>The Prueba para la Certificación de Maestros (PCMAS) is a test offered by the College Board that is used for teacher certification in Puerto Rico. <https://latam.collegeboard.org/pcmas/>



### Key Takeaway

**Districts and schools can intentionally recruit local bilingual educators who are knowledgeable in local community context and culture. Tulsa Teacher Corps is a model for other districts seeking to establish Grow Your Own programs that develop educators prepared to teach MLs.**

### Engaging Key Stakeholders in Decision Making

The Tulsa Teacher Corps was created to meet an acute need: a significant teacher shortage in the district. But beyond just getting more bodies into classrooms, the district recognizes the broad cultural and linguistic diversity of its student body and the importance of working toward a teacher workforce that is more representative of its students. Having a teacher workforce that reflects their student body is a goal that is called out in their strategic plan,<sup>41</sup> and is one of the explicit goals of the Tulsa Teacher Corps.

**“One of the callouts has been specifically to develop and increase a larger pool of diverse educators that are more representative of the students we serve and ensuring that we have all of the pathways to help them grow and to give them opportunity.”**

—Laura Grisso, Executive Director of Language and Cultural Services

### Implementation

District leaders have learned how to better support teacher candidates through the program. Executive Director of Educator Effectiveness Katy Green commented, “Retention and ensuring that we have robust cohorts in terms of numbers is important to us, and it’s also really important that we maintain our program quality, which means that not everybody makes it.” The number of participants leaving mid-program has decreased each year as program leaders have emphasized the support needed to increase retention.

### Impact

Increasing educator recruitment and retention numbers are top priorities for the district. After a lull during the pandemic, the latest Tulsa Teacher Corps cohort is larger than ever, with 73 members entering the program in 2022. In all, approximately 130 teachers have completed the program, in a district with 2,045 teachers (2021-2022 data). While not all of them are dual-language teachers, all Tulsa Teacher Corps members receive a professional development module focused on the shared responsibility of effectively supporting MLs, helping foster the mindset that all teachers are educators of multilingual learners. The retention of Tulsa Teacher Corps members is higher than the retention of novice teachers across the district; 93 percent of Corps members who complete the program return for a third year of teaching, while the novice teacher turnover rate is about 30 percent.

The Tulsa Teacher Corps credits the deep levels of support that Corps members receive throughout their preparation and early years of teaching with this retention success.

**“The biggest thing we hear is how supported they feel. They literally have a partner ... and feel supported through the whole process.”**

—Katy Green, Executive Director of Educator Effectiveness

The diversity of Tulsa Teacher Corps members compared to the district at large is also a sign of success. In the district, 78 percent of students are students of color, and 30 percent of teachers are people of color (source: TNTP’s forthcoming educator diversity data); among Tulsa Teacher Corps members, 42 percent identify as people of color.

Beyond the impact on the teacher workforce, the next stage for the district is to examine the impact of the Tulsa Teacher Corps on student outcomes.

<sup>41</sup>Tulsa Public Schools. (2022). Pathways to Opportunity: Tulsa Public Schools’ 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. [https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1677622078/tulsaschoolsorg/trwnhvzjo4nratjssq/StrategicPlan2022\\_Feb23.pdf](https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1677622078/tulsaschoolsorg/trwnhvzjo4nratjssq/StrategicPlan2022_Feb23.pdf)



## Case Study

### Educator Experience, Selection, Support, and Collaboration

#### What Comes Next

The Department of Language and Cultural Services intends to expand training opportunities for all teachers on how to work with MLs effectively. The Tulsa Teacher Corps also plans to add to its foundational level training for how to work with MLs.

**“Our [ML] population is almost 40 percent. If you’re training to be a high school biology teacher and you only speak English, you will have MLs in your class, so let’s get you some training now so you’re better prepared to be more effective in your instructional practices when you get in the classroom.”**

—Laura Grisso, Executive Director of Language and Cultural Services

The district plans to deepen multilingual learner training for teachers across the district, expanding it from its current focus on language proficiency levels and testing procedures to also include elements of their dual-language educator training for teachers of all subjects.

Department of Educator Effectiveness staff are constantly thinking creatively about teacher recruitment and career development for their Corps members. To increase retention, they are contemplating partnering with local higher education institutions to develop more career pathways beyond initial teacher certification, such as master’s degrees in school leadership programs.



# Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools’ Efforts to Deliver High-Quality Curricula for MLs

## Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, North Carolina



**141,000 students,**<sup>42</sup>  
**19% Multilingual Learners**<sup>43</sup>



**181 schools**<sup>44</sup>



### Planned Intervention

Development of comprehensive instructional resources to increase ML access to high-quality curriculum and materials—the Personalized Academic Command of English (P.A.C.E.) Targeted and Integrated ELD Resource



### Initiative’s Funding Source

Title III<sup>45</sup>

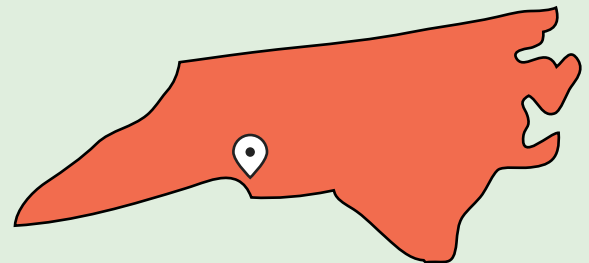


## North Carolina’s Multilingual Learner Population

**114,901** MLs or **7.7%** of the total student population in 2020, about the same as 2010 when MLs totaled **103,249** or **7.5%**<sup>46</sup>

Percentage of grade 4 students scoring at or above Proficient in California, according to the NAEP 2022 Reading Assessment<sup>47</sup>

ML: **9%** vs. Not ML: **35%**



<sup>42</sup> Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. (2023). Retrieved October 6, 2023, from: <https://www.cmsk12.org/domain/100>

<sup>43</sup> Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. (2023). Multilingual Learners Fast Facts. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/19kK2URWwtazMY8maKf43BOgzHhrBe3pP/view>

<sup>44</sup> Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. (2023). Retrieved October 6, 2023, from: <https://www.cmsk12.org/domain/100>

<sup>45</sup> 20 U.S.C. 6825: “an eligible entity receiving funds under section 3114(a) may use the funds to achieve any of the purposes described in subsection (a) by undertaking 1 or more of the following activities: [...] (2) Improving the instructional program for English learners by identifying, acquiring, and upgrading curricula, instructional materials, educational software, and assessment procedures. [...] (7) Improving the instruction of English learners, which may include English learners with a disability, by providing for—(A) the acquisition or development of educational technology or instructional materials.”

<sup>46</sup> National Center for Education Statistics (2022).

<sup>47</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2022 Reading Assessment.



Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' Office of Learning and Language Acquisition has undertaken an immense project to create an instructional framework that makes the high-quality core curricula already used across the district accessible to multilingual learners. The framework combines specific expectations for multilingual learners with content-specific, evidence-based strategies and materials to guide instruction and assessment. The goal, through the Personalized Academic Command of English (P.A.C.E.) framework, is “to ensure access to grade-level standards and instruction” for MLs, and the work is guided by core beliefs that honor the assets and potential that multilingual learners bring to the table, by:

- [Engaging] students in highly challenging, grade-level instruction by focusing on rigor, tolerating ambiguity, and fostering productive struggle.
- [Increasing] accessibility to content topics and standards using language supports, and refraining from simplifying the task, which leads to reduced rigor and negative connotations around the student learning experience.
- [Creating] a culturally responsive classroom environment in which all students are recognized as assets. Educators will challenge systems and practices that are inequitable.<sup>48</sup>

Over the past several years, the Office of Learning and Language Acquisition has developed concrete lesson materials for all grade levels and has worked to bring these resources to teachers in all subject areas. Its goal is to build capacity in teachers districtwide since all teachers have MLs in their classrooms. The instructional resources developed provide exemplars for how to adapt their content curriculum and make it accessible to multilingual learners. As teachers get trained in these resources, the hope is that it will become second nature to take these approaches with other materials, and teachers will “amplify” all their lessons with the strategies they’ve learned with the P.A.C.E. toolkit.<sup>49</sup>

### Key Takeaway

**Education agencies should make grade-level content accessible to all students by using high-quality instructional resources that integrate language and content instruction. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools demonstrates one approach that districts can take to ensure the content and language needs of MLs are addressed from the outset.**

### Engaging Key Stakeholders in Decision Making

The district priority to focus on access to high-quality instructional materials for MLs was in large part inspired by the leadership and expertise of the Office of Learning and Language Acquisition’s executive director, Charlotte “Nadja” Trez. She has extensive knowledge of the district, bringing with her 22 years working in her department at the district level, several years working at the state level, and the experience of serving as President of the National Council of State Title III Directors. This breadth of experience allowed her to lead with the vision to implement high-quality instructional materials for MLs at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). Trez is no stranger to the challenges that confront the multilingual learner sector, including the lack of prioritization when it comes to MLs and high-quality instructional materials.

**“I am an advocate. As you know, if you are in this field, you are more than an educator. You have to advocate for your students and families.”**

—Nadja Trez, Director, Learning and Language Acquisition

<sup>48</sup> Trez, C. (2022, October 19-23). Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' Office of Learning and Language Acquisition: P.A.C.E. Targeted and Integrated ELD Resources [Conference presentation]. Council of the Great City Schools 66th Annual Fall Conference, Orlando, Florida, United States.

<sup>49</sup> Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' Office of Learning and Language Acquisition. (n.d.) P.A.C.E. Framework. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rnAmdLAmQtoHn8-VJF4EDOI7xcZt4NGU/view>





## Case Study High-Quality Instructional Materials

Her vision is grounded in the work of Dr. Kenji Hakuta, Dr. Lily Wong Fillmore, and Aída Walqui.

**“Dr. Kenji Hakuta uses the cyclops analogy. Over the past 40 years, we created two cyclops: content cyclops and language cyclops. They wobble when they walk and eventually, they fall. We have to create a two-eyed creature with content and language integrated so they can walk straight and never fall.”**

—Nadja Trez, Director, Learning and Language Acquisition

In addition to leaning on expert peers and academics in the field, the Office of Learning and Language Acquisition has consulted district teachers throughout the process of developing the P.A.C.E. resources. Feedback from teachers on what materials are most needed and how easy they are to use has informed the ongoing work of improving the resources to make them as impactful as possible.

### Implementation

Trez started the journey of ensuring access to high-quality instructional materials for the district’s multilingual learners by contacting many curriculum vendors to see if what she was looking for could be purchased. When she was unable to find the resources she needed, she decided her department would handle the development of resources in-house. It’s been a long road, as CMS tackled developing an extensive set of resources, including exemplar lessons to demonstrate the principles in the P.A.C.E. framework within the district’s curriculum for all grades K–12. It required a paradigm shift for teachers and administrators to see the importance of this work. The Learning and Language Acquisition team took several years to create the full set of instructional resources, aligned with the high-quality curriculum adopted across the district.

### Impact

The Office of Learning and Language Acquisition held 114 training sessions (in school year 2022-2023, as of March 2023), reaching 1,587 teachers and staff. These trainings are developing educator capacity to understand the various strategies that amplify curricula in ways that integrate language and content instruction. The resources have also been presented at a districtwide meeting of instructional leaders. Anecdotally, teachers have expressed how helpful the resources are, and one learning community wants to make it mandatory next year.

### What Comes Next

The department is working on gathering feedback, reflecting, level-setting the resources they’ve developed, and reviewing materials to ensure consistency across all grade levels. They will also consider feedback from teachers who have implemented the resources to inform the continuous improvement of the P.A.C.E. materials.

The department continues to assess and support their approaches, securing Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) to conduct a three-day intensive training for all instructional staff and curriculum writers on how to write high-quality curriculum material.<sup>50</sup> They also developed an Authentic Linguistic Formative Assessment (ALFA) that aligns with the P.A.C.E. materials and are hopeful that those students with whom they’ve piloted the ALFA will see additional gains on their language proficiency, as assessed by the WIDA ACCESS test.

<sup>50</sup> Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) is a professional development program led by WestEd, a national nonprofit research, development, and service agency. <https://www.qtel.wested.org/>

# Multilingual Learners Can't Wait— It's Time For Action

A learning acceleration strategy is essential for education systems to create comprehensive learning experiences that prepare all students to reach their goals after high school. It is especially critical for multilingual learners and other students who have been historically furthest from opportunity. The case studies above demonstrate approaches that are highly responsive to unique ML communities and illustrate the actionable ways TNTP's six levers of learning acceleration can drive positive outcomes for MLs.



## **Explicitly target and prioritize multilingual learners in the vision for student success.**

Leaders should set a vision that strategically prioritizes student populations furthest from opportunity, which ultimately benefits all students. This means that leaders must clarify what that looks like for MLs and ensure there are clear strategies in place for supporting MLs, including the staffing capacity to successfully implement those strategies. There are commonalities among the leaders featured in this report: They are fierce advocates for MLs, and this passion is often shaped by their lived experiences as multilingual learners and/or bilingual educators; they are innovative in designing systems that address pressing pain points within the broader education system; and they are supported at the highest levels of leadership within their systems.

As multilingual learners continue to be the country's fastest-growing student population, education leaders must bring about changes to actively center and accelerate ML student learning as part of a comprehensive strategy toward academic growth. Consider the following recommendations as starting points:



## **Prioritize and create systems to authentically engage with, collect feedback from, and leverage the expertise of community voices across language and culture.**

Caregivers, parents, and community members are ready to engage in supporting their children's education, and school systems must make clear that they listen to and value community voices and efforts, including when families speak a language different than English and are learning to navigate the U.S. education system. Communication systems should be set up to encourage true dialogue, where districts ask for caregivers' input and use it in decision making, and caregivers share expertise and have insight and influence into decisions impacting MLs. Following through on input from families and caregivers helps build and maintain relational trust, and that is easier to accomplish when there are clear structures in place that support regular engagement. Where districts are newly building and establishing relationships, they can partner with community-based organizations and other entities to support efforts.



**Develop educators who have an asset-based approach to students' multiple identities, including cultural and linguistic identities, and who are equipped with strategies to integrate language and content instruction.**

For educators to recognize their role in teaching MLs, they must feel prepared and supported. An asset-based approach to working with students, which recognizes the strengths they bring to our classrooms and helps sustain them, must be supported systemwide, and the education system must build teachers' capacity to support the specific needs of MLs, their caregivers, and their communities. Education systems should be able to point to evidence that demonstrates how language and culture are honored, valued, and sustained through educational practices.



**Implement systems that collect key data on multilingual learners and make data easily accessible for educators and communities.**

Educators need accessible and comprehensible data, beyond just English proficiency, that deepens their awareness of who their MLs are and how they are doing academically and in language proficiency across all languages of instruction. Data systems must be designed in ways that allow educators to detect disparities, including across intersecting identities that can compound barriers to equitable outcomes. Data systems should also be able to measure instructional practices for impact and help identify whether MLs are receiving the support they need. Clear data can allow districts to connect the initiatives meant to impact MLs to relevant indicators and track the progress of interventions, providing insight on how to continuously improve efforts.

The evidence is clear: Our multilingual learners learn best in instructional environments that leverage and engage their linguistic assets while supporting them in both language and content development. The case studies in this report acknowledge the linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural assets of multilingual students, their caregivers, and their communities. They demonstrate that education systems can and should be designed to dismantle the barriers that limit access to a high-quality instructional experience for every student. All district and state education leaders should seize this moment to bring about learning acceleration opportunities and develop instructional coherence for our country's fastest-growing student population: multilingual learners. They deserve these opportunities and are worth the effort and investment.

Together, let's ensure every student graduates ready to choose from a variety of pathways to the economic and social mobility that education has long promised. Our multilingual learners' futures can't wait—and neither should we when it comes to accelerating their learning and success. They are our future, and we must take these next steps without delay.

**Learn More About TNTP  
and our Multilingual Learner Resources**

Visit [tntp.org](https://tntp.org) or contact us at [info@tntp.org](mailto:info@tntp.org)