

# An Implementation Study of the Early Childhood Language Development Institute (ECLDI): Dual-Capacity Professional Development in San Mateo County State Preschools

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## INTRODUCTION

The Early Childhood Language Development Institute (ECLDI) aims to support the success of young dual language learners (DLL's) currently enrolled in State-funded early learning programs in San Mateo County.<sup>1</sup> Established in 2003 and administered by San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE), ECLDI provides a comprehensive professional development model for early learning professionals and leaders, and families of DLLs. This model works to (1) foster reciprocal, authentic, school-family partnerships; as well as (2) transform the culture, practices, and policies in early learning settings to support classrooms and learning environments that are responsive to the needs and assets of DLLs and their families. In 2015, ECLDI partnered with the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and their Communities at Stanford University (Gardner Center) to assess its current programming and support future development.

Founded in 2001, the Gardner Center partners with communities, researchers, and practitioners to produce evidence-based research to strengthen the well-being of youth and inform the fields of education and youth development. Specifically, we engage in inquiry with partners to address problems of practice and educational equity for children, their families, and communities. The Gardner Center has been working with partners in San Mateo County for over 15 years, including school districts, the Human Services Agency, and the County Office of Education. Gardner Center researchers have led studies in the areas of family engagement, early childhood education, and immigrant children's experiences in San Mateo County.

In this report, we provide background on the relevant national research base as well as relevant local context, describe the current study and methods, and share implementation findings. Specifically, we describe what we learned about program participants and service delivery, promising emerging patterns in teacher and parent practice, and conditions that facilitate or hinder ECLDI program implementation.

## KEY FINDINGS

- ECLDI reflects many best practices of teacher professional development, including providing ongoing sessions that include all levels of site staff, allow for collaboration, are directly tied to classroom practice, and engage providers in self-reflection.
- Program participants show promising attitudes and practices aligned with key ECLDI program objectives, including:
  - Providers' value of and commitment to meaningful family engagement, and integration of home language and culture into the classroom
  - Families' support of home language development and positive cultural identity among their children, and positive school connections
- We observed that ECLDI programs varied across and within sites, including uneven site involvement, teacher participation and engagement, and outreach to families, as well as

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<sup>1</sup> Dual language learners are defined as children who are in the process of acquiring of two, or more, languages during the preschool years, prior to age 5 (Genesee, 2010).

substantively different training delivery models across sites. Despite these differences in training models, we noted similar patterns and variability in provider experience.

## **BACKGROUND**

Strong education in the early years can promote positive physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development, as well as continued success in school and beyond (e.g., Loeb & Bassok, 2007). Further, research indicates that having families involved in young children’s educational experience fosters positive attitudes toward the educational process, supports school readiness, and increases achievement and school success (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Best & Dunlop, 2011; Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, & Lloyd, 2013; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Despite this, schools often struggle with engaging diverse families, as school norms and structures have historically been, and continue to be, most responsive to parents who are middle-class, able-bodied, U.S.-born, and standard-English-speaking individuals (Zarate, 2007; Goodwin & King, 2002). Although these norms seem firmly entrenched, there is an urgent need for schools to include more diverse populations as the nation’s demographics continue to change.

According to national data, the number of families with preschool age children who speak a language other than English at home has steadily increased over the last twenty years (Espinosa, 2010). Studies have found that this growing population of DLLs, typically enter kindergarten and first grade behind their grade-level peers, and that this academic achievement gap often persists through high school due to a lack of academic preparation during the early school years (Beltran, 2016; Espinosa, 2013; Gandara, Rumsberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003). An extensive body of multidisciplinary research establishes the benefits of culturally and linguistically responsive classrooms, which provide home language continuity and support, as playing a role in closing this achievement gap (Burchinal, Field, López, Howes, & Pianta, 2012; Espinosa, 2013; Lindholm & Aclan, 1991; Stipek, Ryan, & Alarcón 2001).<sup>2</sup> Despite this knowledge, school and classroom environments often reflect the dominant culture (Souto-Manning, 2013), and teachers and families commonly believe that quickly assimilating children to the dominant language and culture is important for future academic success (Espinosa, 2013). Thus, addressing the achievement gap for DLLs requires working with families and providers to shift these mindsets.

In San Mateo County, where ECLDI operates, about 70% of all low-income children age five and younger are children of immigrants (Gerstein, Leos-Urbel, & Henderson, 2016). Most of these children were born in United States but have one or more parents who were not (Gerstein, Leos-Urbel, & Henderson, 2016). As such, local educators are charged with serving an increasingly heterogeneous group of students, who face particular academic vulnerabilities. As established in the research, quality early childhood education coupled with strong, meaningful family engagement, can offer specific supports to this population.

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<sup>2</sup> These range from developmental benefits, such as increased social-emotional skills and enhanced neurological functions, to long-term benefits such as improved academic outcomes.

## ECLDI PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

ECLDI offers a dual-capacity professional development model designed to redress the readiness gap for DLLs by supporting their teachers and families to create early experiences that prepare them for a smooth transition to kindergarten and beyond. Specifically, ECLDI aims to support a strong language and literacy base in the early years in both the home language and English; preserve and encourage children’s home languages and cultures; and cultivate and promote reciprocal, authentic partnerships between early learning professionals and education systems and families of DLLs. To this end, ECLDI provides resources and programming at three levels, each described below:

1. County Level: ECLDI provides continuous program development and training to bolster professional norms around culturally responsive family engagement in San Mateo County. Specifically, ECLDI works to align its programming with other system-level initiatives and provides county-wide professional development. As of early 2017, ECLDI has been piloting a new initiative, the Friday CAFEs (Community and Family Engagement), a monthly professional learning community for family engagement providers across the county.
2. Provider Level: ECLDI offers a multi-tiered professional development model for early learning teachers and practitioners (providers) to support culturally and linguistically responsive practices and meaningful family engagement in the classroom and at the school site.<sup>3</sup> During the course of this research, the content and delivery model of these offerings were modified, so the programming described in this report therefore may not reflect the most current training model.<sup>4</sup> As of the writing of this report, the ECLDI provider-level training included:
  - a. Ongoing coaching and technical assistance for state preschool program directors.
  - b. A training series (Provider Series), delivered as an on-site, didactic and interactive workshop that contains modules on language and culture, equity, and family engagement, and includes time for teacher self-reflection and planning.
  - c. A Professional Learning Community (Provider PLC) in the pilot phase. The Provider PLC covers similar content as the Provider Series, but goes into more depth, is more tailored to the site’s needs, and provides more concrete classroom practice support to participants. Additionally, the PLC typically includes a broader array of site-level providers (e.g., program director, assistant teachers, instructional coach).

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout the report we refer to the professional site-level staff as “providers.” This may include the program director, lead teachers, assistant teachers, or instructional coach.

<sup>4</sup> Currently, the provider-level trainings include a) a newly revised two-part foundational series on meaningful family engagement, available on-site for teaching teams; b) a newly revised 4-part series on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning, available on-site and also offered centrally at SMCOE once a year. This series of specifically focused on teaching practices related to dual-languages learning with authentic family engagement strategies integrated throughout the series; c) a PLC model available on-site that brings together teaching teams (including lead teacher and teaching assistants), the site coach (if one is assigned), state preschool technical assistance (if assigned), and the program director. These sessions include various areas of ECLDI training content (based on program need) and incorporate peer support and hands-on activities.

3. Family Level: ECLDI supports families with a parallel training series (Family Series) to promote home language preservation, embracing family cultures and traditions, supporting dual language development including informing beliefs related to second language acquisition, and building partnerships with teachers. The Family Series is offered at early learning sites where provider training has also been offered.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, as of 2016, ECLDI has been encouraging and supporting sites' implementation of Parent Cafés, a peer learning/support group for families based on the Be Strong Families / Strengthening Families™ five protective factors framework.<sup>6</sup>

In the short-to-medium term, ECLDI aims to strengthen a host of teacher behaviors and practices, including cultural competence, reflexivity, and the ability to implement culturally and linguistically responsive classroom practices that engage families in their children's learning. In parallel, families increase their engagement at school and bolster important protective factors (e.g., resilience, connection, knowledge of child development). Over the long term, ECLDI aims to foster early learning sites with teaching teams who are able to implement and sustain dynamic and responsive classrooms with minimal external support. For the complete Theory of Change, see the Appendix.

## THE CURRENT STUDY

In early 2016, ECLDI and the Gardner Center began planning to conduct an implementation study of the ECLDI program model. During this preliminary phase of work, Gardner Center researchers worked with ECLDI staff to co-develop a Theory of Change to represent the program model.<sup>7</sup> In spring 2017, the Gardner Center began research to investigate and document the implementation of the ECLDI model in order to inform program strategy and continuous improvement going forward. Specifically, we examined the following questions:

1. How is the ECLDI model implemented in practice?
2. What factors (e.g., structural, contextual, personal) support or inhibit families' and providers' participation in ECLDI program offerings?
3. What conditions support or inhibit families' and providers' implementation of what they have learned through participation?

To answer these questions, we conducted a qualitative study focused on two early learning centers (i.e., state-funded preschool sites) that have actively participated in ECLDI training over the past two years. At each of these sample sites, we interviewed the program director, teachers and/or assistant teachers, and instructional coaches (i.e., providers). At one site, we also interviewed parents of preschool children, including participants in a recent ECLDI parent training

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<sup>5</sup> This series was also recently revised to reflect the newest research and be more interactive.

<sup>6</sup> For more on Parent Cafés, see: <http://www.bestrongfamilies.net/build-protective-factors/parent-cafes/>

<sup>7</sup> To develop the Theory of Change, Gardner Center researchers reviewed internal program documents and relevant literature, conducted interviews with key stakeholders, and engaged in reflections with the program coordinator and project specialist.

series.<sup>8</sup> Lastly, we interviewed key county-level staff, including ECLDI program staff and stakeholders. In addition to these individual and group interviews, we observed a Parent Café, a Provider Series training, and a Friday CAFE. In total, we interviewed 35 individuals, and observed three ECLDI program sessions (See Table 1).

**Table 1  
Individual and Group Interviews**

Program Directors	2
Teachers (and/or Assistant Teachers)	16
Instructional Coaches	2
Parents	12
ECLDI Program Staff & Stakeholders	3

Additionally, we reviewed and analyzed ECLDI program materials, and drew from our initial set of stakeholder interviews conducted in fall 2016. Coupled with a review of the literature on family engagement, cultural and linguistically responsive practices, and teacher professional development, these approaches provide a multi-faceted picture of ECLDI implementation.

## **FINDINGS: PROGRAMMING & STRATEGIES**

The multi-tiered ECLDI approach includes programming and strategies provided for stakeholders at various levels of reach. For this reason, we report our findings at the County Level, Provider Level, and Family Level, in turn. For each level, we begin with the context and populations served, describe program offerings and participation, and end with reports of promising attitudes and practices in line with key ECLDI targeted outcomes.

### **County Level**

#### *Local Context*

ECLDI program participants and stakeholders described a shifting county context effecting their work as early childhood education providers. On the one hand, participants lauded major investments in early childhood education, such as those offered by the Big Lift and First 5, as providing much needed resources. Program directors have been able to open additional preschool classrooms, hire family engagement staff, offer staff new professional development opportunities, and fund early literacy programs with some of the resources made available through these investments. Conversely, providers also described a high level of administrative demands being made on their time for associated program quality and other state accountability

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<sup>8</sup> We use the term “parent” to refer to the primary adults in the child’s life: this could be mother, father, grandparent, relative, or another caring adult.

measures (e.g., QRIS, DRDP, ECERS<sup>9</sup>). Additionally, providers described an increasingly constrictive economic context and shifting immigrant populations. The rising cost of living has priced families out of qualifying for care in state-funded preschools, displacing long-term community members (including those with longstanding relationships with the school) and leaving some sites with unutilized program spots. Classrooms are becoming increasingly multi-lingual and children and their families come and go more frequently. This is a shift from previous years, where there were typically one or two primary non-dominant languages. Lastly, providers described new legislation that, by requiring fingerprinting and proof of immunization of all family members who interact with children in a classroom, has severely limited parental participation.

### *ECLDI Activities*

In addition to providing professional development and laying the groundwork for their sustainability and growth, ECLDI staff have also been working on updating the provider and family training curriculum, including consulting with regional faculty experts in the early childhood education field. Finally, ECLDI staff has worked with local funders (e.g., Big Lift and First 5 San Mateo County) and policymakers (e.g., QRIS) to ensure that culturally responsive family engagement is incorporated into and aligned with grantmaking and accountability frameworks across the county. SMCOE staff perceive this effort as an important contribution to the sustainability and success of family engagement in the county. Additionally, ECLDI secured funding to implement a new county-wide initiative to bolster a professional family engagement community: Friday CAFEs. Offered monthly, Friday CAFEs include a conversation catalysts (e.g. keynote speaker) to spark conversation and peer learning activities in a nurturing and creative setting for providers working in family engagement and education. Taken together, this work provides important county-wide resources to support meaningful family engagement and culturally and linguistically responsive practices.

## **Provider Level**

### *Participant Population*

Providers at the sample sites were racially diverse and had varied multicultural and linguistic backgrounds. While some teachers were monolingual English speakers born in the U.S., others had different countries of origin and varied in their generational ties to the U.S. First languages spoken by providers included Spanish, Arabic, Hindi, and French. In addition, most providers had

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<sup>9</sup> Nationally, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) aim to improve the quality of early care and education for children by measuring current levels of quality against research-backed standards. In California, these standards tie to: child observation; developmental and health screenings; teacher and administrator qualifications; teacher-child interactions; teacher-child ratios and group size; and program environment.; The Desired Results Development Profile (DRDP) is an observational-based child assessment tool designed to support teachers in observing, documenting and reflecting on children's learning. The DRDP is aligned with the California Preschool Learning Foundations and Curriculum Frameworks and with the Common Core State Standards for kindergarten.; The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) is designed to assess process quality in preschool programs. It provides a picture of how the physical environment and structure of classroom routines supports early learning.



been working at the site for many years, or had prior connections as a parent and/or volunteer. Many teachers and teacher's assistants began as a parent or volunteer, then progressed over time to be a teacher or teacher's assistant.

### *Program Activities*

Over the 2016-17 school year, we observed two different approaches to provider training, one at each of the sites in this study.

At one sample site, a Provider Series was offered in Fall 2016.<sup>10</sup> These trainings were held off-hours, on Saturday mornings, and showed greater participation from newer teachers versus more senior teachers. Here, staff report being given opportunities to reflect on their own cultural experiences, as well as receive support around classroom instruction.

At the second sample site, teacher's assistants, county-based support coaches, and the program director participated together with lead teachers in PLC model sessions as described above. Staff describe sessions that offered concrete tools and resources to support classroom instruction and environments, and included time to reflect and plan. The Provider PLC was held on a continuous basis with trainings provided monthly, and was offered in tandem with an outside trainer specializing in classroom environments.

In sum, we observed two models of professional development for providers that included relevant content, learning with peers, and time for planning.

### *Provider Practices*

Across the sample sites, teachers described practices and beliefs aligned with ECLDI priority areas. We discuss these further below.

*Meaningful family engagement.* Providers described both their strong value of and commitment to meaningful family engagement, as well as specific practices they employ to engage families. When describing their vision for family engagement, providers shared that families should feel recognized in the classroom in an authentic way, "so they can feel at home." In practice, this included teachers creating a welcoming environment, viewing their families from a strengths-based approach, and integrating families into meaningful culturally and linguistically responsive instruction. One teacher described why this was important to her:

I think when parents see that your classroom feels welcoming, they feel like they can come and talk to you. They feel like they don't have to run out [of the classroom], you know? Because sometimes, either because of language or whatever, they feel they cannot talk to the teacher or they're not happy. If there's something that we can do to make them feel welcome, the child to feel welcome, [we try to do it].

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<sup>10</sup> This series was part of a newly revised 2-part foundational provider series.

Providers reported that they often invite parents into class to share their culture through food, music, stories, and pictures. Nearly a dozen concrete examples of this surfaced across both sites. At a deeper level, there were some instances of involving parents in the curriculum and class lessons. For example, one teacher invited parents to make dolls out of recycled materials that represent their culture to go along with a recycling lesson in class. In another example, a class read the book *Everybody Eats Rice*, and the teacher asked parents to write down their recipe of how they cook rice at home and bring it into class. Finally, teachers shared the importance of home language with parents by encouraging them to speak in their first language at home as a way to help their child learn.

In sum, teachers reported attitudes, beliefs, and classroom practices to support family engagement, aligned with ECLDI program goals.

*Integrating language and culture into the classroom.* Providers described a nuanced and integrated view of culture in their classrooms, including a deep value of the culturally and linguistically responsive practices they are working to implement. For example, teachers viewed culture beyond holidays and stereotypes. In practice, providers employed concrete activities with their students such as reading stories, listening to or playing music, singing in different languages, and cooking various cultural foods in the classroom. Further, a few providers mentioned using the internet and videos as resources to expand their lessons into multiple languages when they did not have the language capacity themselves. Providers also shared specific aspects of their classroom environment that are culturally and linguistically responsive to their students and families. These examples centered on books in various languages and traditional materials (e.g., tapestry, food boxes) from their cultures. One of the common examples was teachers asking parents to bring empty cultural food materials (e.g., rice box, tortilla flour, chopsticks) in to the dramatic play area, so the playhouse kitchen was more likely to reflect the food images children see in their home.

In addition, providers learned a few words in each of the languages represented in the classroom, in order to make connections with students. One teacher noted the opportunity of using body language to achieve this same goal if there is a spoken language barrier:

So even though I don't know his language, there's always a way to help them feel better, and I feel like using our own body language, a smile, ... I think that's a way that we can start helping them feel comfortable.

While teachers reported multiple efforts they had made to integrate students' home culture and language into their classroom environment and teaching practices, we also heard reports of an element of variability among the different classrooms. As one of the site staff noted:

Sometimes you have to dig for things, say, cultural-related items in the dramatic play area, It's a mix. It's a lot better than where it was before, but again, it's just continuing [to implement change in] everyday practice.

In conclusion, we observed important promising practices in teacher professional development coupled with reports of desirable provider beliefs and practices in family engagement and cultural and linguistic responsiveness. We also heard of variability in program implementation and teacher practices across classrooms and sites.

## **Family Level**

### *Participant Population*

The families served by the two sample sites had diverse backgrounds, and comprised multiple languages and ethnicities (e.g., Latino/a, Pilipino/a, Arab). Providers reported that there is not just one majority-minority community, but rather shifting demographics each year. This includes diverse immigrant status, including many newcomers, as well as second and third generation communities. In addition, providers and families noted mounting economic pressures in the area that lead to more working hours and increased responsibilities, which may affect parent time available for school participation.

### *Program Activities*

At one of the sample sites, ECLDI offered a parent training series (Family Series). At both sites ECLDI worked to support program staff in hosting Parent Cafés. New this year, ECLDI staff reported offering logistical support including meeting with site staff to map out a master training calendar given other site requirements, as well as support to integrate trainings with other programs and trainings on-site. For example, ECLDI staff met with Raising a Reader staff to learn more about program training and timing needs, as well as coordinate approaches to trainings with families.

### *Family Practices*

The families we spoke to at sites where ECLDI programs were implemented reported positive attitudes, beliefs, and practices aligned with ECLDI targeted outcomes, described in detail below.

*Home language development.* Several parents reported teaching their children to value and speak in their home language. These parents often highlighted a desire for their children to maintain connections with their traditional culture or extended family through language.

One mother described why this is important to her:

We also have to teach [our children] Spanish because they're Latino, and yet there are so many kids who don't know any Spanish. It's such a shame. So, I tell my children to speak to me in Spanish, not in English. And sometimes they try to speak to their dad in English, but I'm always encouraging him to talk to them in Spanish.

*Cultivating positive cultural identity.* In addition to speaking in and teaching their children to value their home language, parents also shared concrete activities they do at home to support their children's cultural identity. The activities described include cooking, dancing, listening to traditional music, and telling the oral history of their culture. One parent described this process of cultivating positive cultural identity among his children:

I'm from El Salvador, and I teach my children about our culture, about why we do certain things. I teach them how to make *pupusas*, and when my children visit El Salvador I tell them to bring me back folkloric [traditional] music and I show my kids how to dance to it. I got my daughter a traditional dress and showed her how it is worn. And my boys, I tell them about how to wear the traditional hat (*sombrero*) and dance with their hands like this, holding hands with the girl. And they ask "Do they do all of this in our country?" And I tell them "Yes, it's all done there, they do this in the schools. They teach it in the schools because it's a typical part of our country." I talk with them and I tell them the history, how these things came to be, so maybe in the future someone will ask them and they'll know.

*Meaningful school participation.* Parents described a number of ways in which they participate at school and in the classroom. This included taking part in multicultural celebrations, bringing traditional things from home into the classroom (such as fabric or food boxes, per teachers' requests), and volunteering in the classroom. Classroom volunteering sometimes involved parents participating in planning and executing the curriculum. At the school level, a parent described increased family engagement over time at the site. Specifically, she noticed more communication with parents about school happenings, as well as more engaging and content-driven meetings and events for parents as opposed to only parent/teacher conferences:

The only thing you would see in the year were the parent conferences, but meetings about other things, like giving information about how to read with your children, you didn't see those. So for me, I've seen a big change.

Parents also reported positive relationships with teachers when describing how they connect with the school. A number of parents shared examples of constructive ways their student's teacher or the principal responded when they raised a concern. For example, one parent reported that when her child had a conflict with another child, the teacher proactively stepped in to address the situation. In her words, "[The teacher and director] pay attention to things, they don't leave it to be solved by us or wait to see if it's solved, they do things."

Despite these positive trends, there was some variability in family-school connections from the families' perspective. This was mostly influenced by the specific teacher, and the extent to which that teacher had embraced culturally and linguistically responsive practices and meaningful family engagement. For example, there were some mentions of strained relationships and negative communication with teachers surrounding children's learning needs.

In conclusion, we saw evidence of families actively encouraging home language development, cultivating positive cultural identities, and participating meaningfully at school. While these are

promising and important practices, we also heard reports of significant variability in parent experience.

## **FINDINGS: CONDITIONS THAT AFFECT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION**

In this section, we describe conditions that facilitate or hinder ECLDI program implementation, as described by program participants and uncovered in our analysis. It should be noted that some of these conditions include contextual factors (e.g., state policy changes, reporting requirements). While not within the realm of influence for ECLDI, such factors could be considered in developing and implementing programs.

### **County Level**

At the county level, ECLDI stakeholders and staff described several facilitating conditions that appeared to bolster ECLDI program implementation. Namely, county leadership (e.g., County Superintendent, departmental heads, etc.) that support the goals of increasing family engagement and cultural and linguistic responsiveness; access to communication with state preschool program directors across the county via regular director meetings; and a favorable funding environment that has allowed ECLDI to access critical program resources and helped to elevate its work in the county. Without this supportive policy environment at the local level the ECLDI work would not be able to exist and grow. However, recent changes in policies at the state and federal level may have a limiting affect. A state policy that requires parents to provide proof of immunization, a preponderance of additional professional development opportunities, and time-consuming requirements associated with funding streams and state accountability frameworks may all constrain ECLDI implementation.

### **Provider Level**

Our research revealed a number of factors that facilitated providers' participation in ECLDI, as well as how they implemented culturally and linguistically responsive classroom practices and meaningful engagement with families. As is typical in implementation research, our study also surfaced a number of factors that acted to hinder how providers participated in ECLDI and how they applied what they learned in the trainings. These factors are summarized in Table 2, and are described, in turn, in the sections that follow.

**Table 2**  
**Factors Affecting Provider Participation and Implementation**

	<b>PARTICIPATION</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>
<b>Facilitating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared planning/ development time already built into teacher schedule allows ECLDI to hold trainings that include all staff</li> <li>• Program director support/buy-in</li> <li>• Provider trainings aligned with staff professional development and accountability requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sessions are offered consistently and ongoing</li> <li>• Learning with and from peers (e.g., teaching teams and colleague-mentors)</li> <li>• Including other provider staff in professional development (e.g., Program Directors, county coaches, TA's).</li> <li>• Trainings closely tied to classroom practice</li> <li>• Time for planning to integrate lessons into classroom practice</li> <li>• Opportunities for self-reflection on own cultural experience.</li> </ul>
<b>Hindering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trainings offered during non-preferred times for teachers</li> <li>• Professional development saturation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenged by nuanced notions of culture and complex interactions around race and cultural “invisibility.”</li> <li>• New state immunization requirements limit provider’s ability to invite families’ participation in classroom.</li> <li>• Integration of professional development into classroom practices.</li> </ul>

*Facilitating Factors*

*Participation.* From our research, we gleaned a number of factors that facilitated provider participation in ECLDI trainings. These were all conditions at the setting level. First, shared planning and development time built into teacher schedules allowed ECLDI to hold trainings that included all staff. Having time already carved out for training on-site, and utilizing it for ECLDI sessions, facilitated strong provider participation in the trainings. Implementing the program with the scarce resource of time in mind has been a critical enabling factor. An additional related factor was the importance of program director support or buy-in. Across both sample sites, program directors were closely involved with ECLDI staff and played a role in cultivating positive attitudes around culturally and linguistically responsive practices and meaningful family engagement. They also encouraged their staff to participate in the trainings. Finally, ECLDI and site staff mentioned increased participation when provider trainings were aligned with other staff professional development and accountability requirements, as this decreased feelings of fragmentation and repetition. Given the load that teachers carry, any strategies that coupled their ECLDI learning with other work requirements facilitated participation and the likelihood of strong engagement.

By aligning trainings with schedules, accountability, and other requirements (for example, training that responds to elements of the QRIS), providers were more likely to engage. Additionally, seeing the leadership participate signaled the value of this work. In sum, provider participation in ECLDI trainings was supported through various factors at the setting level via built-in planning time, program director support, and alignment with other site requirements.

*Implementation.* Teachers pointed to an array of conditions that facilitated their learning, as well as how they implemented new culturally and linguistically responsive practices and meaningful family engagement in the classroom. Specifically, teachers highlighted learning best when trainings: 1) were offered consistently and ongoing; 2) were closely tied to classroom practice, with time in professional development for planning to integrate lessons into the classroom; 3) allowed opportunities for learning with and from peers, both in teaching teams and from colleague-mentors; 4) included other provider staff in professional development, such as program directors, county coaches, and teacher's assistants; and 5) allowed sufficient opportunities for self-reflection on teachers' own cultural experience. These factors are reflective of what research teaches us about effective professional development, and are described in more detail, below.

- Consistent and ongoing. ECLDI staff reported that trainings appeared most effective when they occurred in a consistent, on-going manner. To some extent providers themselves echoed this when they described one-off trainings as the least useful to their practice. A training series that occurs over a sufficient duration (i.e., one year or longer) is well-established in the literature as a critical element of effective teacher professional development (Correnti, 2007; Freedson, 2010) and is tied to impacting teacher practice.
- Closely tied to practice, with time for integration. Providers spoke highly of trainings that incorporated modeling, and found trainings in the classroom to be particularly effective. Specifically, teachers appreciated professional development with hands-on activities that allowed them to “step into the classroom the next day and do it with [their] kids.” In order to facilitate this, providers reported the importance of having time in training sessions to plan how to integrate ideas into their classroom. Within ECLDI trainings, teachers found it particularly useful when they were given the opportunity to talk with their teams about how to implement lessons and when they received support in thinking about how to apply various tools (e.g., “Family Treasures”) in the classroom.
- Learning with and from peers. The most common theme to emerge from teachers was the benefit of collaboration in training sessions. Teachers described positive experiences of working together in professional development sessions, and conversely described negative experiences of not being allowed to collaborate in a session. Within ECLDI trainings, providers specifically appreciated the emphasis on team collaborations which allow teachers to share ideas and align expectations.

One teacher shared:

I liked how we collaborate. They have us collaborate within our team, which is good, because for myself I have four different people, two in the morning, two in the afternoon, so it's nice to see them collaborate with each other and get to see each other. I just like that, that we get to see each other, that we get to collaborate, we get to get other ideas.

The ECLDI strategy of learning with peers is consistent with research in teacher education. This research suggests that collegial support built through pairing colleagues for mutual sharing and growth helps to support continued learning and implementation of new skills (Hains, Lynch, & Winton, 2000).

- Involvement of all site staff. In addition to time for learning with and from peers, our research also highlighted the importance of including program directors, teacher's assistants, and county coaches together in the training sessions. This is consistent with education research which points to the value of involving all levels of staff in trainings. Supporting the learning and development of dual language learners requires more than implementing a single gesture or practice—it requires program-wide considerations (Hains et al., 2000). For example, various site staff described how including teachers' assistants in ECLDI trainings fostered greater buy-in at the site, started a larger conversation among staff, and led to more creativity in the classroom with regard to culturally and linguistically responsive practices. One participant elaborated:

It was just the head teachers [when we started], and they didn't really have a lot of buy-in.... They were just starting to talk and think about supporting home language and supporting family engagement in the classrooms. And then last year we started to bring in the assistant teachers and the aides. I think bringing [them] in has really started a larger conversation... more of a team conversation, and I think they've [all] really bought into it.

As exemplified above, our research suggests that implementation was bolstered when all levels of staff at a site were included in the same trainings.

- Critical self-reflection. Finally, teachers noted that self-reflection is a helpful practice in training sessions, specifically within the context of ECLDI. We know from the literature that self-reflection is critical for cultural and linguistic responsiveness, and teachers reported self-reflecting on their own cultures as part of their ECLDI trainings. According to this literature, teachers first must be guided through reflection about their own identities—including looking at their biases or stereotypes—before they can truly employ culturally relevant teaching strategies (Durden & Truscott, 2013).

In sum, teachers raised a number of factors as being key in making trainings useful and relevant for them, and for translating learnings into classroom practice to support dual language learners and their families. Each of these elements are consistent with the research base, namely that sessions are ongoing, tightly connected to classroom practice, and involve active learning and collective participation (Desimone, 2009; Hunzicker, 2011; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, &



Gallagher, 2007) as well as offer opportunities for critical self-reflection (August et al., 2008; Hepburn, 2004; Durden & Truscott, 2013). Beyond just best practices for trainings, our research suggests that these elements are important in ensuring that professional learning actually makes it into the classroom. Providers highlighted ECLDI sessions as incorporating a number of these key features.

### *Hindering Factors*

*Participation.* Through our research, we gleaned two factors that hinder providers' participation in ECLDI trainings. First, trainings were sometimes offered during non-preferred times for teachers (for example, Saturdays). While ECLDI staff always consults with program directors to set site training schedules, it bears consideration that even if advised by site level staff, off-hour programs may have limited participation. Program directors echoed this concern about limited time for trainings during normal school day hours. Second, ECLDI and site staff spoke either directly or indirectly about over-saturation of professional development as potentially impacting participation in ECLDI trainings. We also heard reports that opportunities for professional development have grown due to increased funding and emerging policies. For example, trainings on various topics such as DRDP and CLASS have become more abundant within the county.

*Implementation.* Teachers raised a number of factors that get in the way of implementing culturally and linguistically responsive practices and meaningful family engagement. These included policy issues (e.g., new immunization laws) affecting family participation in the classroom, working through more complex understandings of culture, and integrating lessons on cultural responsiveness into classroom practice. Each of these is discussed further below.

- State immunization laws impeding family engagement. Teachers talked at length about the extent to which enforcement of new immunization laws is disrupting their family engagement efforts. One primary aspect of this disruption is that it limits the extent to which parents can be present in the classroom as volunteers, and becomes especially problematic when teachers attempt to engage parents as resources in cultural activities. Previously, teachers could ask parents to come in and lead a song in their home language or lead an activity from their home culture. Now, given the new laws, there is a much smaller pool of parents to draw from—sometimes as few as one or two per classroom. One teacher reported:

So they really made it stricter for parents to be able to come and volunteer... A while back when that wasn't the case, I was able to ask parents to please come and help, especially multicultural time. You know, I asked them to help us to learn a song from their language, and we were able to do that before, so now we can't do that anymore.... You know, these are low income families. For parents to actually have all the shots done for them it costs a lot of money, so we were left with what, one parent a class to help us.

The new laws, which require parents to provide proof of immunizations and TB clearance, disproportionately affect immigrant and low-income parents, who are less likely to have health insurance or regular medical care (i.e., a consistent medical provider). Given shifts in the current immigration policy climate, these parents are less inclined to provide

paperwork/documentation that could threaten their status. In addition to making it difficult for teachers to engage with parents in classroom learning activities, the new policy has the effect of making the school and classroom feel unwelcoming to parents who are already feeling vulnerable. As one teacher described:

It's kind of discriminating against the illegal parents that maybe aren't gonna be able to get the shots. So, as a parent who's legally here, they have no problem going to their doctor getting their shots, but you know they're already fearful enough and they were like well you need to go get this shot and have the paperwork and they're like... 'cause they don't wanna get carted away and I understand that.

In sum, the implications of the immunization policy have had a substantial impact on teachers' ability to implement key features of ECLDI trainings including engaging families in the classroom, supporting cultural learning, and creating a welcoming environment.

- Nuanced notions of culture and complex interactions around race. Across sites, providers expressed (to varying degrees) challenges with employing a more complex and nuanced understanding of culture in the classroom. To some extent, providers described struggling to move beyond the notion that culture is something signaled by celebrating on special holidays or cultural days to more of an engrained practice of inclusiveness. This came up specifically around teachers implementing culturally and linguistically responsive practices when not all students fit in a neat cultural box. Take, for example, the second or third generation Pilipino/a students for whom “traditional food” is something they'd have to call their grandmother to ask about, or the Caucasian student who feels cultureless and doesn't have anything “special” to wear on traditional dress day. In addition, teachers shared that they are sometimes confronted by complex interactions between parents reflecting racial and cultural stereotypes, which at times got in the way of cultivating a welcoming, and inclusive, classroom. In light of this, teacher supports that embed critical-reflection and opportunities to unpack these real classroom experiences could be an important part of building cultural competency and effectively implementing culturally and linguistically responsive instruction (Durden & Truscott, 2013).
- Translation of professional development into classroom practices. A final area that providers commented on was the challenge of translating ECLDI training into actual practice. Some of these concerns centered on the realities of many different languages in the classroom (as opposed to just one or two dominant non-English languages), as well as high student mobility with students coming in and out of the classroom throughout the year. Despite feeling like they received good information from trainings, teachers voiced difficulties with applying that knowledge to their particular classroom context—which is a common challenge documented in research on teacher professional development. One teacher elaborated on this, below:

I felt like I took back really good information from it, but then doing it in the classroom was a whole other challenge. So like it felt good, the material, and the advice, and the things that we were all talking about as a group, but then... When do you do that? How do you do it? You know, what makes sense for your class? Because our classes are all different,

so you know, at one time, you know, bringing in parents and doing those things might work for one, but if it doesn't work for another, how do you feel comfortable doing that?

In sum, while teachers shared many concrete examples of culturally and linguistically responsive classroom practices and meaningful family engagement, they also raised a number of hindering factors that can sometimes get in the way of implementation. The factors ranged from individual challenges, such as confronting nuanced notions of culture and complex interactions around race, to broader contextual factors. Together, these hindering conditions offer opportunity points for ECLDI to consider moving forward.

### Family Level

Our research revealed factors that facilitated families' participation in ECLDI, and bolstered their support of home language and cultural identity development as well as positive school connections. Conversely, our research also surfaced a number of factors that acted to hinder families' participation in ECLDI and impede their support of children's' positive cultural development. These conditions are summarized in Table 3, and are described, in turn, in the sections that follow.

Table 3  
Factors Affecting Family Participation and Implementation

	PARTICIPATION	IMPLEMENTATION
<b>Facilitating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site staff/teacher capacity to skillfully outreach to families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families' practices are strengthened by positive teacher support. When teachers and staff exhibit skillful practices, families are more likely to be engaged.</li> </ul>
<b>Hindering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited capacity and experience of site staff (e.g., overstretched admin, staff turnover) to skillfully outreach to families</li> <li>• Trainings scheduled during non-preferred times for parents</li> <li>• Limited language and translation options</li> <li>• Other responsibilities limit time available</li> <li>• Oversaturation of family activities and programs available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children sometimes reluctant to speak home-language (prefer dominant language) or share cultural experiences at school.</li> </ul>

## *Facilitating Factors*

*Participation.* Site staff and teacher capacity to skillfully reach out to families emerged as the one factor that facilitated strong parent participation in ECLDI training sessions. Sessions that provide childcare and snacks, are scheduled by site staff at convenient times for families (e.g., immediately after drop-off), and come with reminders from a teacher were highly attended. Additionally, having dedicated personnel to make phone calls or provide in-person reminders to parents (and request reminders from teachers) can also help to bolster parent participation substantially.

*Implementation.* According to parents, positive teacher support helped strengthen their efforts to develop home language skills and cultivate positive cultural identities among their children. For example, parents reported being encouraged by teachers to speak in their home language as a way to help their child learn, even when parents were unsure about the effects of doing so. One parent shared how a teacher helped her understand the value of home language support:

I was asking the teacher the other day, that if I wanted to teach him the alphabet in Spanish, I had a doubt that if I want to teach him in Spanish he won't learn it well in English. "My mom says this is A (Spanish pronunciation) and here they tell me A (English pronunciation) then how do I say it?" So, the teacher told me that no, it's the contrary. If you teach him Spanish correctly, and you teach him the letters correctly, then they will relate it and learn the second language better.

Moreover, when teachers and family engagement staff exhibited skillful practices, families were more likely to be engaged at the school. In particular, parents described feeling encouraged to participate in events on site when they had a positive relationship with their child's teacher. For example, one parent shared:

And that's also important, we do all this because we feel the teacher's support. For November 2nd, most Mexicans celebrate the Day of the Dead and all of the parents participate, we take fruit or whatever to make the offering. And [our teacher] encourages us, so that's why we feel motivated to do all this so the kids notice all the things that are celebrated in Mexico or Guatemala or wherever and that's good because those are our roots.

In sum, encouragement from teachers played a key role in supporting these positive family practices. Given the importance of family engagement in the ECLDI model, teacher encouragement is a critical dimension of the work.

## *Hindering Factors*

*Participation.* From our research, we gleaned several logistical and contextual factors that limited parent participation in ECLDI trainings. At a basic level, limited capacity and experience of site staff to outreach to families due to, for example, overstretched administration and staff turnover,

appeared to hinder participation. According to an ECLDI staff, skillful outreach includes how the purpose of the workshop is communicated, when the sessions are scheduled, how families are invited and reminded, and how a welcome space is created. The absence of this, in conjunction with other logistical challenges such as sessions offered in limited language options with no site-level translation support, served to hinder parent participation. In addition, we heard reports that parents had limited time available due to increasing responsibilities. As a result of the shifting local context, including astronomical housing prices and growing concerns for safety and stability amid immigration and other law enforcement, many parents are working longer hours, commuting further, and taking on additional family responsibilities. Coupled with this, ECLDI and site staff reported directly, and our parent participants suggested indirectly, an oversaturation of family activities and programs. The result of these contextual factors is more options vying for parents' limited time availability.

In sum, our research revealed numerous factors that hindered parents' participation in ECLDI trainings. Logistical challenges at the site level, such as limited capacity to skillfully outreach to families and trainings offered during non-preferred times and in limited languages hindered participation. Contextual challenges such as increased parent responsibilities that reduce time available and the oversaturation of family programming also hindered participation.

*Implementation.* From the sample of parents we spoke to, all reflected a strong commitment to supporting positive home language and cultural identity development in their children. Although they shared a number of concrete ways in which they do this, they expressed that their efforts are sometimes hindered when children are reluctant to speak their home language or share cultural experiences at school, and prefer instead to speak the dominant language. This was echoed by teachers, who were at times confronted by a child hesitant to speak in their home language, even if it meant that the student could not be verbal at all in class because of their limited capacity to speak English. While parents reported remaining steadfast in their attempts to encourage and facilitate their children's positive cultural development, as reiterated in ECLDI trainings, their efforts could possibly be bolstered by additional supports for navigating their children's shyness and reticence to speak in their home language.

## **CONCLUSION**

Through this research, we sought to uncover how providers implement the ECLDI model in practice, including what factors support or inhibit families' and providers' participation in program offerings. In addition, we investigated what conditions support or inhibit families' and providers' integration of what they learned into practice. Through interviewing key ECLDI staff, site providers, and families about their experiences and observing a number of ECLDI sessions, we developed a multi-faceted picture of ECLDI program implementation in the 2016-17 school year. We found that ECLDI trainings reflect many best practices of teacher professional development, including sessions that are ongoing, include all levels of site staff, allow for collaboration, and engage providers in self-reflection. Teachers expressed finding particular value in training sessions closely tied to classroom practice, with opportunities and support to integrate lessons into their specific classes. In addition, we found that program participants showed promising

attitudes and practices aligned with key ECLDI program objectives. For providers, this included value of and commitment to meaningful family engagement, and integration of language and culture into the classroom. For families, this included support of home language development and positive cultural identity among their children, as well as positive school connections. Lastly, we found that there was variability in participation and implementation, including varied site involvement, teacher participation and engagement, and outreach to families. Each of these findings is situated within the current county and state context. At times, the local context provided supports to bolster this work, such as increased funding and visibility within quality and accountability measures. However, contextual factors sometimes served as hindrances to ECLDI, provider, and family efforts, including strict immunization laws, mounting economic challenges, and oversaturation of trainings. These key findings, coupled with consideration of the current context, offer several opportunity points for ECLDI moving forward.

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## APPENDIX