



# Strengthening the Teacher Workforce to Support Multilingual Learners: A Tool for State Educational Agencies

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## Introduction

One in 10 public school students in the United States are designated as English learners (ELs), an increase of more than 25 percent over the past 2 decades (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). In nearly half of states, the proportion of students designated as ELs has more than doubled since 2000. Further, several states—such as Kentucky, Mississippi, North Dakota, and South Carolina—are serving substantial numbers of ELs for the first time in recent history (NCES, 2022).

With these increases, many state educational agencies (SEAs) are grappling with shortages of certified teachers to provide bilingual instruction or English language development (ELD) support to their linguistically diverse student populations.<sup>1</sup> **This tool helps state leaders identify specific needs to recruit, retain, and support teachers who serve multilingual learners (MLs).**

## Terminology

In federal education policy, the term *English learner* (EL) refers to an elementary or secondary school student who (a) has a home language other than English and (b) is developing English language skills to succeed in U.S. educational settings. ELs are legally entitled to support and services for learning English, a policy that stems from the Supreme Court ruling in *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) that ELs were “effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education” in the absence of English language development (ELD) support. This ruling was extended in *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981), which established that programs to support ELs must be (a) based on sound educational theory; (b) implemented effectively with sufficient resources; and (c) evaluated for effectiveness following a trial period. Additionally, current federal policy articulated by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015) specifies that education agencies are obligated to sufficiently staff EL programs (Lhamon & Gupta, 2015).

Importantly, EL status changes over time, and children who reach a certain level of English proficiency are reclassified as English proficient and are no longer considered ELs but rather *former* or *monitored ELs* (Sugarman, 2020). Therefore, EL is a dynamic term that only applies to a child for a limited time. The term *multilingual learner* (ML), on the other hand, is inclusive of all students who have a home language other than English, regardless of whether they are or have been classified as an EL. Further, ML is an asset-based term that emphasizes children’s multilingualism as a strength, rather than focusing solely on their developing skills in English (Yankelowitz, 2023).

In this tool, we intentionally use the term ML, except when specifically referring to the unique needs of students officially classified and monitored as ELs as well as to the legal responsibilities of education agencies to support those needs. Our focus on multilingualism as a strength aligns with “Being Bilingual is a Superpower” initiatives by the U.S. Department of Education (2023) that aim to

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<sup>1</sup> *State educational agency*, or SEA, is an umbrella term for large-scale education agencies, including tribal education agencies and education agencies in territories.



support children’s development of multilingual skills. Additional terms and their definitions are provided in the [glossary](#).

## A Systems-Change Approach

Although this tool focuses on recruiting and preparing teachers to work with multilingual learners (MLs), we recognize that each educational policy is part of a larger system and needs to be considered within that system. Recruitment and preparation, for example, need to be considered in the frame of broader teacher workforce issues—retaining teachers once they are hired, diversifying the teacher workforce to be more representative of the students, developing culturally responsive and sustaining practices, and supporting professional growth. Teacher workforce policies also are part of a larger system, and there is increasing recognition that policies should be considered within a frame of systems change rather than as isolated issues.

This tool seeks to facilitate systems change. This type of change focuses on transforming the root causes that perpetuate undesirable patterns of behavior within a system, while recognizing the intricate web of connections that characterizes systems. A system is made up of multiple levels:

- *Individuals* are at the heart of the system, with their ways of understanding the world and interpersonal dynamics.
- *Institutions* are the tangible structures governing how work gets done, their norms, and practices.
- *Structural interconnections* include how those institutions are interconnected, influencing, and being influenced by broader system behaviors (Kania et al., 2018).

In this tool, we focus on the institutional level while recognizing the critical importance of considering the views individuals bring and the structural interconnections across the system. One critical example of structural interconnections is the link between efforts to increase the diversity of the teacher workforce and pathways for teacher candidates who will work with MLs. Some efforts to recruit and prepare bilingual teachers explicitly target individuals from the school communities, even starting programs in high school to recruit young people into the teaching profession.

## Purpose of the Tool

**The purpose of this tool is to guide state educational agency (SEA) leaders to support pathways for and retention of teachers who provide high-quality instruction to multilingual learners (MLs).** In particular, the tool focuses on developing teacher pathways and supporting teacher retention in three key educational contexts for MLs:

- *General education* settings in which MLs are in classrooms with non-ML students and may or may not receive integrated language support.



- *Targeted English language development (ELD) or English as a second language (ESL) settings* offered to English Learner (EL)-designated students with the specific goal of supporting their English language skills.
- *Bilingual education* programs that provide instruction in both another language and English, such as dual immersion or transitional bilingual programs.

## How to Use the Tool

This tool walks you through the multiple components to consider when developing a robust teacher pool to serve multilingual learners (MLs). To use this tool, you will begin by reflecting on the diversity of students who make up the group of MLs in your location, continue by reviewing the definitions and contexts of the different programs that serve MLs, and then consider the qualifications and current availability of the teachers for each type of program. Once you have completed each of those sections, you will use that information to examine areas of alignment and misalignment with respect to recruitment, certification, and retention practices. Within each section, we include several questions designed to gather information about your context and supports for teachers serving MLs, followed by reflection questions designed to prompt deeper thinking about possible misalignment or areas to make changes to strengthen the teacher workforce. Additional resources and examples of programs that address related issues are provided throughout for further reading.

**Who should use the tool?** Ideally, the state educational agency (SEA) director of MLs or someone with a similar role should complete this tool or be responsible for its completion. We recommend forming a working group that includes people from across the SEA to complete the tool together. However, this tool is designed to be flexible in order to meet the varied needs of SEAs. We encourage you to set aside substantial time to think through all the topics raised in this tool, but you may choose to do so in a way that works best for you and your colleagues. You may opt to complete the entire tool in order or skip around and focus more heavily on certain topics to best meet the needs of MLs in your state/jurisdiction. Your team may prefer to work together to complete the tool or complete it individually before convening to discuss. Whatever approach you choose, we hope this tool can prompt discussions between:

- Various actors within an SEA.
- An SEA and others involved or interested in developing and supporting the pool of teachers serving MLs. These other individuals may include, for example, local educational agency (LEA) administrators, LEA ML directors, leaders of teacher preparation programs, leaders from alternative certification programs, and leaders of professional learning for educators of MLs (e.g., county education employees).

**Once the tool has been completed, you will have:**

- A clear description of MLs in your state/jurisdiction and the programs that are in place to meet their needs, and an understanding of whether these two are aligned.



- A clear description of the current state of the teacher workforce who work with MLs, as well as their pathways into the teaching profession and strategies to support retention.
- A better understanding of the specific shortages or misalignment of resources.
- Access to resources that may help policymakers consider options to address the gaps, misalignments, and/or programmatic improvement.
- A compilation of data and information that can be shared with SEA leadership and policymakers to support proposed efforts to strengthen the teacher workforce to support MLs.

## Goals for Using the Tool

**As a first step, identify 1–3 goals you have for using this tool.** For example, “identifying specific gaps in the current pathways for teachers of multilingual learners (MLs) that can be included in state educational agency (SEA) conversations about addressing teacher shortages.”

1.

2.

3.

**What is your role in the SEA? Who else do you want to work with to use this tool to accomplish the goals listed above?** For example, you may want to engage bilingual/multilingual/English learning development (ELD) or English as a second language (ESL) program specialists, regional coordinators, world languages coordinators, staff from the state department of standards, staff from the talent office focused on Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) or bilingual certification, or staff supporting the Seal of Biliteracy.



## Section 1. Multilingual Learners in Your State/Jurisdiction Context

This section collects information about the multilingual learners (MLs) in your state/jurisdiction, the programs that serve them, and the teachers in those programs. The summary of this information will show where students spend most of their day and the characteristics and qualifications of their teachers. Completing this section will help you identify gaps and misalignments in programs or services for specific groups of ML students that could be addressed by strengthening teacher pathways and retention.

### Characteristics of MLs

MLs are a diverse group of students with varied linguistic and academic needs. For example, a student who has recently arrived in the United States with strong verbal skills but without a strong literacy background in their home language will have different instructional needs than a student born in the United States who has been participating in bilingual programs since kindergarten. The purpose of this section is to describe the characteristics of the ML population in your state/jurisdiction and to use that information to consider specific teacher workforce needs.

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**How does your state/jurisdiction talk about MLs?** *What terminology does your state/jurisdiction use (e.g., English learners [ELs], MLs, dual language learners [DLLs]) and how is each term defined?*

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**Is there any variation in how local educational agencies (LEAs) refer to this population?** *If so, please describe. In some states/jurisdictions, LEAs or other local systems may have slightly different terms.*

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**MLs are a diverse student population, with a wide range of home languages, English language skills, and other characteristics and assets that relate to their educational experiences. What does the ML population look like in your state/jurisdiction?** *Factors to consider include MLs' home languages; the proportion designated as ELs, former ELs, or long-term ELs; the proportion who are newcomers or have limited or interrupted formal education; the proportion dually identified with disabilities; and the proportion who are Indigenous MLs. For which of these groups of MLs (or other groups) do you not have data but would like to?*

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**How does the ML population vary across your state/jurisdiction?** *For instance, is the population concentrated in certain parts of the state/jurisdiction? Does the concentration of students who speak a particular home language differ across locations?*

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## Reflection

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**Which groups of MLs face the greatest shortages of teachers?** *For example, there may be particular challenges related to staffing positions in rural areas with a low incidence of MLs or around recently immigrated students or students who are long-term ELs.*



## Program Descriptors

Identifying and categorizing the types of education programs available to MLs in your state/jurisdiction can be challenging. This tool delineates the different skills, credentials, and endorsements that teachers may need to work in three broad categories of programs: general education classrooms, targeted English language development (ELD)/English as a second language (ESL) programs, and bilingual programs. Use this section to describe the types of programs available to MLs in your state/jurisdiction.

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**Describe MLs' experiences in general education classrooms.** *For example, MLs may be in sheltered English instruction classrooms taught by teachers with appropriate endorsements, or they may spend much of their day in general education classrooms taught by teachers with no required EL endorsement (in these cases, MLs often also receive a certain number of minutes of dedicated ELD/ESL instruction).*

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**Describe the targeted ELD/ESL programs available.** *Consider the frequency with which support is offered (e.g., minutes per day) and other programmatic features, as well as how common they are.*

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**Describe the bilingual programs available.** *Consider the languages and grade spans in which the programs are offered, how the programs are funded, and how commonly the programs are available.*

- *How many bilingual programs are there in your state/jurisdiction?*
- *How do LEAs determine whether to offer bilingual programs (e.g., some states/jurisdictions have legislation requiring bilingual programs)?*
- *What are the goals of the bilingual programs (e.g., transitional bilingual program with the goal of moving to 100 percent English or 100 percent home language in a Native/Indigenous language revitalization context, dual immersion bilingual programs where students learn content in each language)?*

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**In which education programs are most of your MLs being served? What is the distribution of MLs across each of the program types?**

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## Reflection

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**Are the programs available for MLs meeting their needs? Are some programs meeting MLs' needs better than others?** *Consider what data are available to answer this question.*

**If there are education programs that are *not* meeting MLs' needs, could this problem be addressed by providing teacher workforce support? If so, what knowledge and skills would teachers need to develop? What kinds of endorsements would show they have those skills?**

**How well do the programs available in your state/jurisdiction align with the needs of the ML population? Areas of misalignment may indicate areas of focus for teacher workforce support.**



## Teacher Characteristics

You have now identified the different characteristics of the ML population in your state/jurisdiction and the different education programs that serve MLs. You have also identified ML groups whose needs are not being met as well as specific programs that may not be meeting MLs' needs. In this section, you will consider the teachers who currently work in programs serving MLs and will identify gaps (whether a need to expand professional knowledge of current teachers or a need to recruit, prepare, and retain additional teachers) in the teacher workforce working with MLs.

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### **How do you talk about and categorize teachers who serve MLs in your state/jurisdiction?**

*For example, write "Bilingual teachers are defined as ..." or "ESL teachers are defined as ..."*

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### **Does your state/jurisdiction currently have an identified shortage of teachers in general?**

*You may have state/jurisdictional data to answer this question. In addition, U.S. Department of Education data on official teacher shortage areas can be found on [this data application](#).*

**If so, describe it here:**

**Does your state/jurisdiction currently have an identified shortage of teachers who serve MLs? If so, where or in what areas are you facing challenges?** *For example, some states/jurisdictions face geographical challenges, such as staffing teachers in rural-remote areas; programmatic challenges, such as having fluent speakers of languages other than English to teach academic content. States/jurisdictions may also struggle with a lack of diversity in the workforce, such as not having teachers from the same backgrounds as MLs.*

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**In addition to identified shortages of teachers who serve MLs, what anecdotal information do you have about shortages, particularly district-specific shortages? What additional information do you need to understand more about those shortages?**

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## Reflection

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**What other state/jurisdiction policy contexts might be important to keep in mind when considering the teacher workforce serving MLs? Are there other challenges that affect the teacher workforce?** *For example, are there different understandings of program components that could lead to hiring teachers with mismatched qualifications? Or are there challenges with teacher retention?*

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**How might specific state/district policies be contributing to any mismatch you have identified between ML student needs, ML programs, and the current teacher workforce?**

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## State/Jurisdiction Policy Goals and Vision

Reflecting on your state's or jurisdiction's high-level goals regarding MLs and their education can help drive planning to address corresponding teacher shortages. The following questions will help you consider the current priorities for MLs in your state/jurisdiction and how those priorities may contribute to identifying gaps in teacher pathways and retention.

**What are the long-term goals regarding multilingualism or the education of MLs that have been articulated by education leaders in your state/jurisdiction?** *For example, the California Department of Education (2019) has articulated a goal that by 2030, half of all K–12 California students will be enrolled in programs leading to proficiency in two or more languages. If your state/jurisdiction leaders have not articulated goals, please note that as well.*

**If your state/jurisdiction leaders or educational agency does *not* have clear goals in these areas, what are some possible reasons why?**

**What policies *do* exist that may suggest a future direction for MLs?**

**What are state/jurisdiction leaders' long-term goals regarding the overall teacher workforce, including recruitment, preparation, certification, and retention?**

**How do state/jurisdiction officials describe work to diversify the teacher workforce?**

**How do teachers of MLs fit into these goals, if at all?**

**Has your SEA/LEA implemented any initiatives in the last 5 years to address pathway or retention issues for teachers of MLs?** *For example, educators and officials in some states/jurisdictions have implemented residencies or Grow Your Own (GYO) bilingual teacher initiatives.*

**If so, can you describe them? Do they address any of the gaps identified in this tool thus far?**



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## Refining Your Goals for Using This Tool

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Given your answers to the questions above, which summarize your state/jurisdiction goals and vision for MLs and the teacher workforce, what do you see as key strengths and challenges in this area?

After reflecting on the information above, enter any revised or expanded goals here (see the [“Goals for Using the Tool”](#) section in the introduction).

- 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  - 4.
- 



## Section 2. Existing Support for Teacher Pathways

The questions in this section are intended to guide you to identify the existing support and programs in your state/jurisdiction to recruit and prepare teachers of multilingual learners (MLs). Then, you can reflect on how well the programs, such as certification policies, certificate and diploma programs, and alternative certification routes, meet your teacher workforce needs. Note: Section 3 looks at existing avenues for supporting and building skills among current teachers.

If you do not have access to data to answer any of the questions, consider: *What data do I need to better answer the questions? How would I access these data?*

### Certification Policies

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**What policies, if any, does your state educational agency (SEA) have regarding certifications?** Consider whether certifications are available and/or required, how regulations vary across grade spans and types of programs, whether your SEA provides guidance to credentialing institutions or local educational agencies (LEAs) hiring teachers, and any other details that may be relevant in your state/jurisdiction.

- **For teachers of MLs who are in bilingual programs?**
  - **For teachers who teach targeted or designated English language development (ELD)/English as a second language (ESL)?**
  - **For general education teachers who have MLs in their classrooms?**
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- **Resource Spotlight:** Want to learn more about how SEAs' EL and bilingual certification requirements can support teacher pathways? [Addressing English Learner Teacher Shortages](#) focuses on SEA-level strategies for addressing shortages of teachers who are well prepared to work with students identified as ELs, including by implementing certification requirements for EL teachers (Hopkins & Gautsch, 2023).

### Reflection

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**Are there any identified challenges LEAs or schools face in adhering to policies around certifications? Are there any challenges specific to certain types of LEAs or schools?** For example, some states/jurisdictions have unique challenges in low- or high-incidence LEAs, linguistically diverse LEAs, or rural or urban LEAs.

- **Resource Spotlight:** Interested in making your certification policies more flexible? [Leveraging Flexible Teacher Certification Policies to Address the Bilingual Teacher Shortage](#) provides guidance on how SEAs can use flexible authorization policies—such as providing multiple pathways to certification, a menu of authorization requirements, probationary



certifications, and flexible reciprocity—to attract and retain bilingual teachers (Rutherford-Quach et al., 2021).

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**Beyond existing programs, what else is needed to meet the multiplicity of needs you have described?**

- **Resource Spotlight: Want to learn more about certification policies in other SEAs?** [50-State Comparison: English Learner Policies](#) presents a national overview of EL policies in K–12 schools across all 50 states, including whether EL teachers are required to hold a specialist certification or endorsement. It may help identify gaps in your own state/jurisdiction (Rafa et al., 2020).
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## Certificate and Diploma Programs Available to Prospective Teachers

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**How do certificate and diploma programs for general education teachers in your state/jurisdiction incorporate supports for MLs?** *Consider certificates to identify ML-related coursework taken, the extent of programs that offer coursework related to MLs, and so on.*

**What certificate and diploma programs are available to prospective targeted ELD/ESL teachers?** *Describe the different programs available, where they are offered, how many prospective teachers participate annually, who manages and funds the programs, and the focal grade spans in the programs.*

- **Program Spotlight: Scholars programs can attract bilingual students to become ELD/ESL or bilingual teachers.** Western Oregon University's [Bilingual and Diverse Teacher Scholars Programs](#) provide economic support and a professional learning community for prospective teachers and function in collaboration with LEAs.

**What certificate and diploma programs are available to prospective bilingual teachers?** *Describe the different programs available, where they are offered, how many prospective teachers participate annually, who manages and funds the programs, and the focal languages and grade spans in the programs.*

- **Resource Spotlight: Want to learn about state Native language certifications?** Nearly half of states have some form of Native language credentialing. The [Native American Language Resource Center](#) has compiled a resource that details the Native language teacher credentialing in each state.
- **Program Spotlight: Teacher residency programs can build on partnerships between universities and LEAs.**
  - Portland State University's [Bilingual Teacher Pathway program](#) recruits and prepares bilingual and bicultural individuals to become licensed teachers.
  - University of Washington's [BECA program](#) for elementary bilingual teachers prepares dual language educators who then work in one of six partner districts.

**How does your SEA or ML coordinator collaborate with existing programs?** *For example, does your SEA and ML coordinator collaborate with leadership of university programs? If so, how?*

- **Resource Spotlight: Want to learn more about facilitating collaboration between higher education programs for teacher certification?** [Addressing English Learner Teacher Shortages](#)



focuses on SEA-level strategies for addressing shortages of teachers who are well-prepared to work with students identified as ELs, including facilitating a higher education network focused on teacher recruitment and training (Hopkins and Gautsch, 2023).

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**Do existing preservice programs recruit and retain teacher candidates from similar backgrounds as the MLs in your state/jurisdiction? Which programs have been most successful in doing so?**

- **Resource Spotlight: Want to learn more about how Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) can support pathways for teachers serving MLs?** [The Role of Hispanic-Serving Institutions in Strengthening the Latinx Teacher Pipeline](#) features a discussion with leaders in the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) about the Hispanic Educational Resources and Empowerment (HERE) Act, which aims to enhance collaborations between HSIs, school districts, and community colleges to provide pathways to the teaching profession for Latinx students (Garza, 2020).

**Additional resources on diversifying the teaching profession:**

- [Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color](#)
  - [Culturally Responsive Practices as a Strategy for Diversifying the Educator Workforce](#)
  - **Program Spotlight: Tribal-based degree programs can support Native educators and students.** [The Ozhitamaadizoyang Project](#), which means “making it for ourselves” in Ojibwemowin, is developing an Anishinaabe-based bachelor of education program and professional learning programs to support Native teachers and students in Northern Wisconsin.
  - **Program Spotlight: Alternative assessment strategies can address barriers to teacher licensure.** The Oregon Department of Education has developed a [multiple measures approach](#) to mitigate assessment barriers to licensure for multilingual teacher candidates.
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## Reflection

**Do these programs provide teachers with the skills they need to support MLs in general education? In targeted/designated ELD/ESL? In bilingual programs?**

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**What challenges to being successful do existing programs face?** *For example, programs may be under- or over-subscribed, there may not be enough teacher education professors to teach the courses, or potential students may not have the resources to complete the programs as designed.*

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**Beyond existing programs, what else is needed to meet the multiplicity of needs you have described?** *Consider specific needs in your state/jurisdiction. For example, “We need more programs to support Arabic-speaking students to become bilingual teachers,” or “We need Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) students who graduate from language immersion schools to find place-based sustaining career opportunities rather than migrating out of Hawaii.”*

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## Alternative Strategies for Certification

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**Does your SEA have alternative strategies for certification for general education teachers working with MLs?** Consider professional learning opportunities and ELD/ESL endorsements. Some states, such as [Massachusetts](#), require all teachers to obtain a language-focused endorsement.

- **Program Spotlight: In-service training can support ELD/ESL certification for general education teachers.**
    - The Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education provides an [English for Speakers of Other Languages \(ESOL\) Institute](#) and scholarship to increase the number of ESOL-certified teachers
    - The University of Delaware offers [Additional Certification in ESOL/Bilingual \(ACE\)](#), a series of five courses that lead to certification. Financial assistance is available.
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**Does your SEA have alternative strategies for certification for prospective ELD/ESL teachers?** Describe the different programs available, where they are offered, how many prospective teachers participate annually, who manages and funds the programs, and the focal grade spans in the programs.

- **Resource Spotlight: Interested in what alternative certification pathways can look like for ELD/ESL teachers?** [Addressing English Learner Teacher Shortages](#) focuses on SEA-level strategies for addressing shortages of teachers who are well prepared to work with students identified as ELs, including competency-based and SEA–university partnership programs and creative ways to fund alternative certification pathways (Hopkins and Gautsch, 2023).
  - **Program Spotlight: District–university partnerships provide opportunities for teacher professional learning.** The [California Bilingual Teacher Professional Development Program](#) provides state funding to expand the number of qualified bilingual/bicultural teachers through district–university partnerships.
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**Does your SEA have alternative strategies for certification for prospective bilingual teachers?** Describe the different programs available, where they are offered, how many prospective teachers participate annually, who manages and funds the programs, and the focal languages and grade spans in the programs.

- **Resource Spotlight: Interested in what alternative certification pathways can look like for bilingual teachers?** [Leveraging Flexible Teacher Certification Policies To Address The Bilingual Teacher Shortage](#)
- 



- provides guidance on how SEAs can use flexible certification policies—such as providing multiple pathways to certification, a menu of certification requirements, probationary certifications, and flexible reciprocity—to attract and retain bilingual teachers.
- **Program Spotlight: Programs can both provide academic support to students and develop bilingual/bicultural teachers.** The [California Mini-Corps \(CMC\) Program](#) provides direct instructional services for migratory students in grades K–12 through a cadre of trained college tutors, as well as an opportunity to build interest in teaching and promote bilingual/bicultural teachers.
- **Program Spotlight: Programs can support employed paraeducators to become certified bilingual program teachers.** [Woodring Bilingual Teaching Fellows](#) is a 2-year bachelor’s degree completion program and a Community Route to Certification partnership between Western Washington University and districts/schools in Washington State.

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**What, if any, opportunities exist to support general education teachers who are currently teaching, paraeducators, or other school staff to become certified bilingual or ELD/ESL teachers?** Describe the different opportunities available, where they are offered, how many teachers participate annually, who manages and funds the programs, and the focal languages and grade spans in the programs.

- **Resource Spotlight: Programs to support paraeducators or other school staff to become certified teachers are examples of Grow Your Own (GYO) programs.** [A 50-State Scan of Grow Your Own Teacher Policies and Programs](#) describes these programs and highlights their role in diversifying the teacher workforce, especially in bilingual education (Garcia, 2020).

**Additional resources featuring GYO programs and programming information:**

- [Chicago’s Bilingual Teacher Residency](#)
  - [Bilingual Education: Lessons from Washington State](#)
  - [Addressing the Bilingual Teacher Shortage](#)
  - [Diversifying the Teacher Workforce Through Grow Your Own: A Snapshot of Three Programs](#)
  - [Cultivating Teacher Talent Through Grow Your Own Programs – Program Spotlight: Hillsboro School District, OR](#)
- **Program Spotlight: Oregon provides funding to [local GYO programs](#) that address locally defined needs.** Grantees provide programming that targets high school students and others interested in becoming teachers, depending on the goals and needs of each community.
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## Reflection

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**Do the existing alternative certification programs provide teachers with the skills they need to support MLs in general education? In targeted ELD/ESL programs? In bilingual programs?**

**Do the existing alternative certification programs recruit teacher candidates from similar backgrounds as the MLs they will serve? Which programs have been most successful at this?**

**What challenges to being successful do each of these alternative certification programs face?** *For example, a program may not have enough applicants or enough teacher education professors to teach the courses.*

**Beyond existing programs, what else is needed to meet the multiplicity of needs you have described?** *Consider specific needs in your state/jurisdiction. For example, “We need more programs to support paraeducators to become certified teachers,” or “We need better recruitment strategies to enroll individuals in alternative certification programs.”*

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## Section 3. Existing Support for Teacher Retention and Professional Learning

The questions in this section guide you to identify the existing support and programs in your state/jurisdiction to retain teachers of multilingual learners (MLs). Then, you will reflect on how well the supports, such as those focused on improving working conditions, professional learning opportunities, and supports for school and local educational agency (LEA) leadership, meet your teacher workforce needs.

If you do not have access to data to answer any of the questions, consider: *What data do I need to better answer the questions? How would I access these data?*

### Improving Working Conditions

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**What, if any, support does your state educational agency (SEA) provide to LEAs to ensure there are adequate instructional resources to offer bilingual education or English language development (ELD)/English as a second language (ESL) programming?** *Consider provision of concrete resources, as well as support for LEAs to fund or find appropriate resources.*

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**What, if any, support does your SEA provide to LEAs to ensure adequate instructional resources to support MLs in general education settings?** *Consider provision of concrete resources, as well as support for LEAs to fund or find appropriate resources.*

- **Program Spotlight:** The Virgin Islands Department of Education compiles online resources for current teachers. This [ESOL Empowerment](#) hub pulls together resources on topics that range from policies and procedures to changing mindsets to high-quality instructional practices.
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**What support does your SEA provide to promote teacher well-being in the workplace?** *Consider support for teacher collaboration, teacher agency, or planning time, or other support that may improve teachers' day-to-day working conditions.*

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**What support does your SEA provide to promote teacher well-being outside of the workplace?** *Consider support such as pay and benefits.*

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**Do teachers working with MLs have equal access to these types of support?** *For example, do ELD/ESL teachers have co-planning time with their general education colleagues?*

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## Reflection

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**Are the existing types of support successful? How do you define and measure success?**

**What are the challenges associated with supporting LEAs' provision of adequate instructional resources?**

**Are the existing types of support for teacher well-being effective for teachers working with MLs? How do you define and measure success?**

**What are the challenges to supporting the well-being of teachers working with MLs?**

**Beyond the existing support, what else is needed to improve working conditions for teachers working with MLs? Consider specific needs in your state/jurisdiction. For example, "We need more resources to implement bilingual programs in languages besides Spanish," or "We need better pay and benefits to support teacher retention."**



## Professional Learning Opportunities

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**What, if any, in-service professional learning opportunities exist to support *general education teachers serving MLs* to implement high-quality instructional practices for MLs?**

*Describe the different opportunities available, where they are offered, how many teachers participate annually, who manages and funds the programs, and the grade spans in the programs.*

- **Resource Spotlight:** Want to learn more about professional learning opportunities in other states? [50-State Comparison: English Learner Policies](#) presents a national overview of EL policies in K–12 schools across all 50 states, including whether English learner (EL) training or ongoing professional learning is required of general classroom teachers (Rafa et al., 2020).

**What, if any, in-service professional learning opportunities exist to support *targeted ELD/ESL teachers* in implementing high-quality instructional practices for MLs?**

*Describe the different opportunities available, where they are offered, how many teachers participate annually, who manages and funds the programs, and the grade spans in the programs.*

**What, if any, in-service professional learning opportunities exist to support *bilingual teachers* in implementing high-quality instructional practices for MLs?** *Describe the different opportunities available, where they are offered, how many teachers participate annually, who manages and funds the programs, and the focal languages and grade spans in the programs.*

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## Reflection

**Are these existing professional learning opportunities successful? How do you define and measure success?**

**What challenges do these opportunities face to being successful?** *For example, a program may not have enough applicants or enough teacher education professors to teach the courses.*

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**Beyond existing opportunities, what else is needed to meet the multiplicity of needs you have described? Consider specific needs in your state/jurisdiction.** *For example, “We need more opportunities for general education teachers to learn how to support MLs,” or “We need more training for teachers to learn how to support a student’s home language development when they don’t speak the language.”*

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## Strengthening School and LEA Leadership

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**Do you provide guidance to school or LEA leaders regarding how to support MLs, including guidance on how to support children who are classified as ELs?** *Consider supports for principals, superintendents, and other school administrators.*

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**Do you provide guidance to school or LEA leaders around bilingual education?** *Consider supports for principals, superintendents, and other school administrators.*

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**What, if any, professional learning opportunities exist to support school or LEA leaders in implementing high-quality instructional practices for MLs?** *Describe the different opportunities available, where they are offered, how many administrators participate annually, who manages and funds the programs, and the focal languages and grade spans addressed in the programs.*

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## Reflection

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**Are these existing professional learning opportunities and guidance successful? How do you define and measure success?**

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**What challenges are there to being successful in these efforts?** *For example, some school administrators may choose not to participate in professional learning opportunities.*

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**Beyond existing professional learning opportunities and guidance, what else is needed to meet the multiplicity of needs you have described?** *Consider specific needs in your state/jurisdiction. For example, “We need more training opportunities for administrators in low-incidence LEAs,” or “We need to develop strategies to ensure schools value support for MLs.”*

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## Section 4. Reflection and Planning

Review each of the sections you have completed:

- *Section 1. Multilingual Learners (MLs) in Your State/Jurisdiction Context* (characteristics of MLs, program descriptors, teacher characteristics, state/jurisdiction policy goals and vision, refining your goals for using this tool)
- *Section 2. Existing Support for Teacher Pathways* (certification policies, certificate and diploma programs available to prospective teachers, alternative strategies for certification)
- *Section 3. Existing Support for Teacher Retention and Professional Learning* (improving working conditions, professional learning opportunities, strengthening school and local educational agency [LEA] leadership)

This tool has provided you with an opportunity to gather, summarize, and synthesize key information about MLs, the programs they participate in, the teachers who serve MLs, and the programs that recruit and train those teachers. Throughout the document, you have identified both strengths and needs.

In this final reflection section, we invite you to identify the specific challenges, shortages, or misalignments where you and your team can best dedicate time and resources to address. Refer to your goals for the tool to help guide your next steps.

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**Given all of this information, briefly summarize the areas in which there are challenges, shortages, or misalignments of information, personnel, and/or resources. Keep in mind the needs of the ML population, the types of programs available for MLs, the current teacher workforce, and existing policies and programs for recruitment and certification.**

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**List at least three action items to guide your next steps:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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**Who should be involved or who can you reach out to for guidance regarding next steps?**

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**How will you define success for these efforts? How will you collect the data you need to measure success?**

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**What funding mechanisms will you seek to support this work? We have included some federal sources of funding below; individual state educational agencies (SEAs) also have funding streams to support teacher pathways.**

**Add any additional reflections on supporting the ML teacher workforce in your state/jurisdiction.**

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## Resources to Support Financing Programs

### [Raise the Bar: Create Pathways for Global Engagement](#)

One of the two goals for the Raise the Bar initiative is to “provide every student with a path to multilingualism.” This resource provides a summary and account of the U.S. Department of Education’s three main strategies to achieve this goal, which are to support English learners (ELs), increase access to bilingual education, and prepare a multilingual workforce to succeed in a global economy.

### [National Professional Development \(NPD\) Program](#)

[*Webpage description:*] The NPD Program provides grants for eligible entities to implement professional development activities intended to improve instruction for ELs and assists education personnel working with ELs to meet high professional standards. Professional development activities may include both preservice and in-service activities.

### [Native American Language Grant \(NAL@ED\)](#)

[*Webpage description:*] The purposes of the NAL@ED program are to support schools that use Native American and Alaska Native languages as the primary language of instruction; maintain, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans and Alaska Natives to use, practice, maintain, and revitalize their languages, as envisioned in the Native American Languages Act of 1990 (25 U.S.C. 2901 et seq.); and support the nation’s First Peoples’ efforts to maintain and revitalize their languages and cultures, and to improve educational opportunities and student outcomes within Native American and Alaska Native communities.

### [Unlocking Career Success](#)

[*Website description:*] Unlocking Career Success is an interagency initiative that reimagines how our nation’s high schools prepare all students to thrive in their future careers. This joint effort across the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Commerce will support public- and private-sector leaders, government agencies, and other community-based organizations to help students earn postsecondary degrees and industry credentials that our employers need, and our economy demands.

### [Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence \(Hawkins\) Program](#)

[*Webpage description:*] The Hawkins Program, authorized under Part B of Title II of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA) is designed to support centers of excellence at institutions of higher education (IHEs). The selected centers of excellence must be established at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); Tribal Colleges or Universities (TCUs); or Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), such as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), with a State-accredited teacher preparation program, to help increase the number of well-prepared teachers,



including teachers of color, resulting in a more diverse teacher workforce prepared to teach in our nation's low performing elementary and secondary schools and close achievement gaps. This program focuses on the various aspects of the teacher preparation pipeline, including the recruitment, preparation, support, placement, and retention of teachers in high-need local educational agencies (LEAs) to support underserved students. Through this program, the Secretary seeks to fund applicants that propose to incorporate evidence-based components and practices into their teacher preparation program.



## Glossary

**Bilingual (teaching) certification:** a professional certification that allows teachers to work with student populations whose primary language may not be English and teach in bilingual programs that provide instruction in both another language and English. Also known as a **bilingual authorization**, a **bilingual credential**, or a **bilingual endorsement**. However, **bilingual endorsement** is typically used to refer to an *add-on* to a teaching certification, rather than the certification itself.

**Dual language learner (DLL):** “a child who is acquiring two or more languages at the same time, or a child who is learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language” (Office of Head Start, 2016). Typically used in the early childhood education context.

**Dual language program:** “a bilingual program where the goal is for students to develop language proficiency in two languages by receiving instruction in English and another language in a classroom that is usually comprised of half primary-English speakers and half primary speakers of the other language” (Lhamon & Gupta, 2015). Also known as **two-way bilingual program** or **developmental bilingual program**.

**English language development (ELD):** “a program of techniques, methodology, and special curriculum designed to teach EL students explicitly about the English language, including the academic vocabulary needed to access content instruction, and to develop their English language proficiency in all four language domains (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing). ESL instruction is usually in English with little use of the EL students’ primary language(s)” (Lhamon & Gupta, 2015). May be **pull-out**—in which students are “pulled out” of general education classrooms to receive ELD instruction—or **push-in**—in which a certified ELD teacher provides instruction in general education classrooms (Colorín Colorado, n.d.). Also known as **English as a second language (ESL)**, **English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)**, **designated ELD/ESL**, or **targeted ELD/ESL**.

**English learner (EL):** an individual “(A) who is aged 3 through 21; (B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school; (C)(i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; (ii) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual’s level of English language proficiency; or (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and (D) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual—(i) the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards; (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society” (Elementary and



Secondary Education Act of 1965, Section 8101(20), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Also known as **English language learner (ELL)**.

**Former English learner:** “a student who reached English proficiency and was exited from the EL status. Federal law requires LEAs to monitor students for at least two years to make sure that: (1) they have not been exited too early; (2) any academic deficits incurred as a result of participating in the EL program have been remedied; and (3) they are meaningfully participating in the standard program of instruction comparable to their never-EL peers. In addition, the ESEA now requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to report on the number and percentage of former ELs meeting state academic standards for four years” (New America, n.d.).

**General education settings:** In this tool, classrooms in which multilingual learners (MLs) are in classrooms with non-ML students and may or may not receive integrated language support.

**General education teachers:** In this tool, these are teachers who do not have an EL or bilingual endorsement but may be teaching MLs in their classes.

**Grow Your Own (GYO) programs:** “partnerships between school districts, institutions of higher education, and community-based organizations to recruit and prepare community members to become teachers in local schools” (Garcia, 2022).

**Long-term English learners:** “English learner (EL) students who have been enrolled in a U.S. school for six years or more and have not been reclassified as fluent English proficient” (REL West & WestEd, 2016).

**Multilingual learners (MLs):** Prekindergarten to grade 12 students “whose home or ancestral language is a language other than English; in many cases, these language(s) have been oppressed or debased, explicitly or implicitly, by national and local policies and institutions.” An “umbrella term that includes the many terms and labels used to identify linguistically minoritized students in U.S. public schools” (REL West & WestEd, in press).

**Structured English immersion (SEI):** “a program designed to impart English language skills so that the EL student can transition and succeed in an English-only mainstream classroom once proficient. All instruction in an immersion strategy program is in English. Teachers have specialized training in meeting the needs of EL students (e.g., an ESL teaching credential and/or SEI training), and have demonstrated strong skills in promoting ELD and SEI strategies for ensuring EL students’ access to content” (Lhamon & Gupta, 2015).

**Transitional bilingual education (TBE):** “a program that utilizes a student’s primary language in instruction. The program maintains and develops skills in the primary language while introducing, maintaining, and developing skills in English. The primary purpose of a TBE program is to facilitate the EL student’s transition to an all-English instructional program, while the student receives academic subject instruction in the primary language to the extent necessary” (Lhamon & Gupta, 2015). Also known as **early-exit bilingual education**.



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