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# UNDERSTANDING EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES TEACHING MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS:

A Qualitative Research Study about  
Educator Preparation, Classroom  
Experiences, Institutional Barriers, and  
Requests for State Support

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS REPORT

This report uses the following terms to describe students whose home language backgrounds include languages other than English:

- 1. Multilingual learners:** This term, which appears frequently in this report, incorporates an assets-based approach to affirm the rich cultural and linguistic strengths that students who speak languages other than English bring to their school communities.
- 2. English Learner:** This term continues to be widely used, particularly in legal and government circles. Both California and Federal law require school districts to offer certain protections and resources to students who are designated English learners. This report uses the term “English Learner” to affirm those legal rights and protections.
- 3. EL:** This term is an abbreviation of the term “English Learner” and is also used in this report.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

Multilingual learners who speak languages other than English at home are the future of California. To ensure that their rich linguistic and cultural heritages are celebrated and valued, it is essential that all teachers have the skills, knowledge, methodology, cultural and linguistic foundations, and sensitivity to guide them in building their English language proficiency and acquiring academic content.

As part of a qualitative research study generously funded by Sobrato Philanthropies, Public Advocates interviewed twenty-five educators—including faculty of bilingual authorization programs and current and former K-12 educators across the state—to gather their observations and recommendations with respect to working with multilingual learners and coordinating bilingual authorization programs.

This report is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on the experiences of current and former K-12 educators of multilingual learners. The second section discusses the landscape of bilingual education from the perspective of faculty of bilingual authorization programs. Both sections include recommendations for the State and requests for support.

### SECTION ONE

In section one, current and former K-12 educators expressed concerns about the quality of preparation they had received to teach multilingual learners and the efficacy of embedded English learner authorizations. They described their strategies to support students, including collaborating with colleagues, participating in district-provided professional development opportunities, and seeking training and growth opportunities outside of the district. Several interviewees also expressed concern about racism and anti-immigrant sentiment at their school sites and how the unique needs of newcomer students had been overlooked in educator preparation programs and classroom instruction.

Educators offered several recommendations for the State, including:

1. Ongoing professional development and training in culturally responsive frameworks for all educators who provide instruction to multilingual learners;
2. Specific guidance for educator preparation programs to support candidates in assessing newcomer students' in-school and out-of-school needs and supporting students' language and literacy development;
3. Stronger multilingual learner authorization standards in single-subject, multiple-subject and education-specialist credentials, including foundational knowledge in English learner methodology and clinical experience;
4. Additional funding for Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) to guide districts in supporting multilingual learners' literacy and development;

5. Guidance to all school districts that reminds educators of their curricular obligations with respect to integrated and designated English Language Development, explains the list of available authorizations to teach multilingual learners in different instructional settings, and highlights the importance of adopting an asset-based approach to uplift multilingual learners that celebrates their cultures, experiences, and values;
6. More cohesion within educator preparation programs and stronger connections between educator preparation programs and school districts to foster a greater understanding of the real-life implications between course content and student outcomes; and
7. A clear vision and strong leadership regarding what meaningful access to academic content and educational programs looks like for multilingual learners.

## SECTION TWO

Section two of the report discusses the evolution of the bilingual education landscape over the past 30 years. Faculty from 11 bilingual authorization programs across the state discussed their program strengths and innovations, including strong social justice and racial justice frameworks, the provision of primary language instruction and individualized support to candidates, and innovative program designs, such as the Asian Language Consortium and intentional learning partnerships with institutions of higher education in countries outside of the United States.

Some positive program adaptations made during the pandemic included the transition to a virtual program delivery model, additional credential options—such as single-subject and education-specialist credentials—and the use of online platforms to meet learning objectives. Interviewees also discussed institutional challenges, such as the inconsistent and inequitable provision of release time to faculty across institutions, and the need for additional faculty to increase the sustainability of bilingual authorization programs and create capacity to procure and review relevant data, including candidate survey data, to grow and improve their programs.

Faculty also offered a series of recommendations, both for the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (Commission) and the State more generally. Their recommendations for the Commission included the following:

1. More Commission staff to support bilingual authorization programs;
2. Additional guidance and resources for bilingual authorization programs, particularly newer programs. Examples include: a clearinghouse of exemplars, a referral-and-support process through which programs going through the accreditation process could support each other, a portal on the Commission website dedicated to the bilingual education landscape in California, and sensitivity to the politics of the accreditation process;
3. Concerns about the extent to which tests serve as a barrier to bilingual educators of diverse backgrounds earning their credential and entering the classroom; and

4. A request that the Commission, in its accreditation process, consider the state of an institution's facilities and offer recommendations that might facilitate an institution's bid for additional funding for colleges of education.

Faculty also made the following requests of the State:

1. A narrative shift surrounding teaching and a public relations campaign for the profession that includes examples of the financial assistance available and highlights the important and impactful work that educators do;
2. Further consideration of the State Seal of Biliteracy as a vehicle with which to encourage bilingual high school graduates to pursue a career in teaching;
3. Strong and consistent messaging to show universal support for bilingual education;
4. Targeted distribution of funding to bolster bilingual education programs;
5. Additional financial assistance for teacher candidates to support them in meeting their expenses and reduce the burden assumed by the institutions that incur some of candidates' credentialing costs;
6. Additional support from the California State University Office of the Chancellor;
7. Conversations with faculty and administrators at institutions of higher education about the importance of balancing faculty academic freedom with adequate educator preparation to ensure that all educators are fully prepared upon entering the classroom; and
8. Ongoing funding for the Asian Language Consortium.

Finally, faculty shared a number of lessons learned in their work. Many offered observations about the shifting landscape of bilingual education and noted the importance of centering their program's mission and vision. Others called for transparency to candidates about what their programs offered and fostering strong connections to candidates' sense of community. Finally, faculty emphasized the role that healing can play in the field of bilingual education to support candidates in discovering and celebrating their multicultural identities.

## INTRODUCTION

**M**ultilingual learners are the future of California. Approximately [2.5 million students](#) speak a language other than English in the home, with the ten most commonly spoken languages being Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese, Filipino/Tagalog, Punjabi, Russian, Farsi and Korean.<sup>1</sup> To celebrate the strengths and rich linguistic and cultural heritage of California's students, it is essential that their teachers have the skills, knowledge, methodology, cultural and linguistic foundations, and sensitivity to guide and support them in building their English language proficiency and acquiring academic content.

California, like much of the nation, is experiencing an acute educator shortage, one that predated the pandemic but has been exacerbated by its effects. This educator shortage includes a [critical shortage of bilingual educators](#), who provide a vital source of support and guidance to multilingual learners.<sup>2</sup> However, bilingual authorization programs have been in short supply since [Proposition 227](#) passed in 1998, requiring multilingual learners to be provided instruction in English and imposing restrictions on bilingual education.<sup>3</sup> Although the number of these programs has grown since [Proposition 58](#) passed in 2016 and removed the English-only instruction requirements, the demand for qualified bilingual educators far exceeds the supply.<sup>4</sup>

As part of a qualitative research study generously funded by Sobrato Philanthropies, Public Advocates interviewed twenty-five educators, including faculty members affiliated with institutions of higher education across the state, and current and former K-12 educators, including classroom teachers, administrators, and English learner specialists, who worked in a number of districts across the state. The purpose of these interviews was to gather information about educators' experiences working with multilingual learners and faculty members' experiences coordinating bilingual authorization programs. All interviews were conducted one-on-one via phone and/or Zoom and were often accompanied by follow-up correspondence and/or resources shared via e-mail.

This report is divided into two sections. The first section synthesizes feedback from current and former teachers of multilingual learners who provided powerful accounts of their experiences in educator preparation programs, described how they endeavored to meet the needs of their multilingual learners while teaching, and shared specific recommendations about the improvements they believed were needed, as well as the steps that the State could take to realize those improvements. The second section takes a close look at bilingual authorization programs across the state and synthesizes observations, recommendations, and requests for support from faculty members affiliated with institutions of higher education statewide that offer bilingual authorizations. These educators spoke with passion and candor about their programs and the adaptations made during the pandemic, the institutional and other challenges they experienced, and their requests for assistance from the State and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

Apart from the beginning of the second section of the report, which includes discussion of the strengths and innovations of bilingual authorization programs across the state and identifies some institutions by name with the permission of the interviewees, this report does not otherwise attribute any observation, request or recommendation to any interviewee or institution to protect interviewees' confidentiality and encourage their candor.

## SECTION 1: THE PREPARATION OF EDUCATORS OF MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

The United States is home to more than five million English learners. California has more multilingual learners than any other state. [Recent data from the California Department of Education](#) show that in the 2020-21 school year, there were more than one million English learners and one million former English learners—otherwise known as Reclassified Fluent English Proficient students, or RFEPs—in California.<sup>5</sup> These students speak more than 75 languages and bring rich family and cultural traditions to California’s schools. All teachers who have English learners in their classrooms—even just one—must receive training and authorization to provide the specialized instruction these students need to build their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in English and successfully reclassify from being an English learner to English proficient.<sup>6</sup> To that end, reclassification is the process by which English learners demonstrate competency in their English reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, in part by earning a score of “4” on a test called the English Learner Proficiency Assessments of California, or ELPAC.<sup>7</sup>

There are different instructional settings and approaches for multilingual learners. Here are some of the most common:

1. **Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE):** An instructional approach that uses strategies to ensure that content area is understandable to English learners and is applicable to multiple instructional settings, including Integrated and Designated English Language Development (ELD), described below, and Bilingual instruction.<sup>8</sup>
2. **Integrated English Language Development, or ELD (Within Content Area):** Instruction appropriate for the level of language proficiency as identified for each English learner. The instruction is designed to promote the effective and efficient acquisition of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of English learners.<sup>9</sup>
3. **Designated ELD:** Instruction provided during a time during the regular school day that focuses on the state-adopted ELD standards to assist English learners in developing English language skills.<sup>10</sup>
4. **Bilingual Instruction:** Instruction for primary language development and content delivered in the student’s primary language.<sup>11</sup>

### QUALITY OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION

Educators who have taught, or continue to teach, in schools across the state, decried the quality of preparation that they had received.

#### Inadequate Focus on Multilingual Learners in Educator Preparation Programs

All interviewees experienced some form of educator preparation, either before or after they first entered the classroom. To that end, some interviewees received instruction that centered or touched on the needs of multilingual learners prior to entering the classroom and others did so after they had already started teaching. Nearly all interviewees spoke critically of the foundation that they had received in their educator preparation programs to provide instruction to multilingual learners.

Interviewees expressed:

- Concern about the quality of the language and literacy components of their credentials, which one interviewee characterized as “abysmal.”
- Concern that the [Crosscultural Language and Academic Development Certificate](#) (CLAD), which used to be issued through January 2011 to authorize instruction for English learners, and/or the embedded English learner authorization that they had earned as part of their credential, did not provide them with the foundation they needed to teach multilingual learners; one interviewee shared a view echoed by others that they thought the CLAD prepared them well until they entered the classroom and realized how much professional development they still needed.<sup>12</sup>
- Frustration that while their educator preparation programs had, for the most part, built awareness that multilingual learners required different instructional strategies, the programs did not specify what these strategies were or how to employ them.
- The sentiment that their educator preparation programs included next-to-no focus on employing Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) strategies in the classroom.

Some interviewees earned a [Bilingual Crosscultural Language and Academic Development Certificate \(BCLAD\)](#), now known as a bilingual authorization, and shared mixed reviews of this authorization:<sup>13</sup>

- The certificate itself had inherent limitations because it was only offered in select languages and not in each of the most common languages represented among multilingual learners. One interviewee cited an example of a teacher who spoke Laotian whom their district wanted to hire to teach multilingual learners but encountered myriad difficulties because the BCLAD was not available in Laotian.
- The resources available for those who did not take a class but studied for the BCLAD exam instead were minimally helpful; one interviewee described studying for the exam using a book and deriving very little of value from the experience.
- The BCLAD did not do a good job of connecting theory and practice; one interviewee who earned a BCLAD wished that there had been a stronger connection to classroom instruction.
- There is a bigger push from districts for [Crosscultural Language and Academic Development](#), or CLAD-certified, and BCLAD-certified teachers; however, such positions are difficult to fill, which may force districts to hire staff who need these credentials to appropriately serve multilingual learners but do not have them.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Importance of Baseline Pedagogical Knowledge in English Learner Methodology for All Faculty**

Multiple interviewees expressed concern that the quality of educator preparation was entirely dependent on the pedagogical knowledge and skills of a given instructor. For example:

- One interviewee shared that there needed to be a “floor” with respect to the quality, content and completeness of instruction provided by educator preparation program faculty. Prior to the decision to embed English learner authorization in single-subject and multiple-subject credentials in 2002, the interviewee shared that courses may have been taught by professors who had relevant pedagogical knowledge with respect to English learner methodology. Now, any professor could teach the course and may not necessarily be equipped with the necessary skills and pedagogical knowledge to provide a strong foundation to candidates as to how to teach and guide multilingual learners.
- Another interviewee also commented on the degree of variance in the instruction provided by educator preparation program faculty, depending on the program in which candidates were enrolled and their instructor. The interviewee commented that candidates would not necessarily know how much curricular focus an instructor might have on multilingual learners or be aware of the metric or standard to which they should hold their instructors accountable. As a result, some candidates might complete their programs with significant relevant content knowledge and instructional strategies to serve multilingual learners well, while others may exit their programs with far less such knowledge and far fewer strategies.
- A third interviewee discussed the tension between more prescriptive state-mandated course requirements for candidates with respect to multilingual learners and greater curricular flexibility. The interviewee wondered whether educator preparation programs should include more explicit, state-mandated curricular elements applicable to multilingual learners.

## EMBEDDED ENGLISH LEARNER AUTHORIZATIONS

According to [guidance](#) from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (Commission), all teacher candidates admitted to a California Multiple Credential Program (which authorizes teachers to teach in elementary school settings) or Single Subject Teacher Credential Program (which authorizes teachers to teach in middle school or high school settings) on or after July 1, 2002 under Assembly Bill 1059 would earn credentials with embedded English learner authorizations.<sup>15</sup> This change also extended to education specialist credentials (which authorize teachers to teach in special education settings) as of June 2006. What this means is that teaching credentials earned after these dates include an automatic English learner authorization, although not necessarily for all instructional settings.

[This table](#) shows and categorizes the available authorizations and the instructional settings in which teachers are authorized to offer instruction to multilingual learners.<sup>16</sup> According to guidance from the California Department of Education in 2019, [both integrated and designated ELD are required for all multilingual learners](#).<sup>17</sup>

Interviewees expressed mixed feelings about the embedded English learner authorizations. While one interviewee thought that the change was generally positive and had contributed to newer teachers entering the classroom with more resources and knowledge than veteran teachers, most interviewees expressed lukewarm sentiments:

- One interviewee expressed concern as to whether instructors had the necessary skills and pedagogical knowledge to prepare candidates to enter the classroom and teach multilingual learners.
- Multiple interviewees expressed concern that the shift to embedded English learner authorizations in multiple-subject, single-subject and education-specialist credentials had created additional confusion for districts with respect to hiring and placement, as well as logistical difficulties for Human Resources (HR) departments. They expressed concern that HR departments would not understand the new rules or which authorizations permitted teachers to teach in which instructional settings.
- More than one interviewee described the difficulties associated with [understanding this table, which describes authorizations and instructional settings](#).<sup>18</sup> One interviewee went so far as to call the table a “nightmare” to follow and wished that the Commission had provided more guidance about the changes.
- Another interviewee lamented that, given the severe educator shortages that have persisted for years and predate the pandemic, the decision to require different authorizations for different settings was, in a practical sense, at odds with our current reality, in which districts are scrambling to fill educator vacancies any which way they can.
- A third interviewee expressed concern that due to the opacity of the system of authorizations, there is likely to be undue reliance on district HR departments to understand the rules and ensure that only teachers who are authorized to provide Designated ELD, for example, do so.

## EDUCATORS’ EXPERIENCES IN THE CLASSROOM

### Range in Quality and Usefulness of Professional Development

Due to the inadequate preparation that interviewees generally believed they had received to provide strong and equitable instruction to multilingual learners, they adopted different strategies to build their knowledge and skills to support their students.

- Several sought support and guidance from colleagues.
- One described maximizing their students’ home languages in instruction and building connections to the English language.
- Others availed themselves of district-provided professional development. Some helpful examples cited included:
  - Training on [EL RISE](#),<sup>19</sup> which supports districts in providing comprehensive and robust instruction to multilingual learners and implementing the English Learner Roadmap,<sup>20</sup> which is state policy for school districts as to how to welcome, understand and educate English learners throughout California,

- Training administered to staff by English learner specialists, and
- Training provided to bilingual program staff by district staff who had content-area expertise.
- Still others shared that their districts or schools did not provide meaningful professional development with respect to strengthening instruction for multilingual learners.
- One described the professional development their school offered, which sometimes highlighted project-based or inquiry-based instruction, as not having been reflective of the specific students they served, many of whom identified as students of color and benefited from more structured instruction. Given the disconnect between the professional development offered and the needs of the student population, the interviewee observed that their fellow teachers generally exhibited a certain reluctance to pursue professional development opportunities.

Interviewees also described their decision to apply for training opportunities from outside organizations, [such as New Leaders](#), or to seek training from experts in the field to compensate for insufficient professional development from their district to support multilingual learners.<sup>21</sup>

- One interviewee expressed frustration that it had become teachers' responsibility to seek professional development and believed that the responsibility to provide comprehensive and relevant professional development should fall on districts instead.
- Multiple interviewees commented that ongoing professional development for educators to build their efficacy in providing instruction to multilingual learners should not only be provided by districts on an ongoing basis but also be required in the way Continuing Legal Education, or CLE, courses, or Continuing Medical Education, or CME, courses are for attorneys and physicians.

### **Racism and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment**

Several interviewees spoke with concern about the role of racism and anti-immigrant sentiment in their school communities and their impact on the instruction provided to multilingual learners. They also expressed concern about the reluctance of some of the veteran teachers with whom they had worked to adopt new approaches and grow their instruction and content knowledge to better serve multilingual learners.

- One interviewee described how the teachers at their school – who did not have a CLAD Certificate but had instead received a waiver to teach English learners on a temporary basis – were asked to take a class to earn a CLAD Certificate prior to the expiration of their waivers. The interviewee reported that not only were teachers reluctant to take the class to earn their CLAD Certificate, they referred to the day of the week on which they took their class as “Taco Tuesday.”
- Another interviewee described the reluctance of longtime teachers at their school to differentiate instruction for a single student. In the face of a demographic shift, which saw the

entry of more multilingual students in the school district, teachers were really frustrated about having to serve multilingual learners. The interviewee attributed some of the anti-immigrant and racist sentiment to misperceptions and stereotyping of Latinx students who dressed a certain way or who hailed from a particular neighborhood. The interviewee commented that they could not remember the number of times that fellow educators had said, in reference to Latinx students, *they just don't care*. The interviewee shared their view that this was an issue of historical racism: Latinx families had been treated poorly for so long that it could be difficult for them to advocate for themselves as they and their families had been told for years that they were not worth much and there were clear differences in terms of options for success for Latinx students and other students from immigrant backgrounds.

- A third interviewee shared that the political situation in the United States in the last decade had impacted the general public's ability to embrace divergent ways of thinking and being. They commented that one could perceive the influence of the anti-immigrant, English-only push and the ways in which such sentiments are at odds with the ethos of our multicultural society and the importance of championing bilingual programs and fostering school communities in which students' languages and cultures are affirmed and celebrated. The interviewee lamented a perceived shift back to doing things in English and worried that bilingual programs did not feel "healthy."

### **Newcomer Students are Overlooked**

The [California Department of Education defines newcomer students](#) as students born outside of the United States and recently arrived in the United States.<sup>22</sup>

Several interviewees discussed the extent to which they believed that newcomer students had been omitted from consideration, both in educator preparation and instruction. Interviewees expressed the following observations:

- District-provided professional development tends to be designed for students with higher levels of English language proficiency and is less applicable to students with lower levels of English language proficiency, including newcomer students. One interviewee, a school principal, reported that teachers who worked with newcomer students and had received district-provided professional development found it inapplicable to their students but did in fact benefit from English-as-a-second-language training, which they felt was more practical and helpful to their instruction.
- Educator preparation programs need to provide more intentional and targeted training to address the question of what it means to be a language-acquisition teacher. In addition, educator preparation programs need to take the spectrum of newcomer students' instructional needs into account, especially since some newcomer students may not have attended school in their home countries and may need orientation to such things as holding a pencil and learning the Roman alphabet.
- Finally, another interviewee spoke of districts' need to orient their focus to newcomer students generally, some of whom may need a range of supports outside of school, including

legal services, immigration support, housing, and health care resources, to name a few. Districts need to consider not only the needs of newcomer students but those of their families. If families are experiencing instability, housing insecurity, hunger or uncertainty with respect to their immigration status, students will not be able to learn and progress appropriately. The interviewee also spoke hopefully of the [community schools model](#)—which has received an increase in funding in the last two fiscal years, and which adopts a whole-child, evidence-informed approach to support students’ and families’ learning and well-being—as a way to provide more holistic wraparound support for newcomers students.<sup>23</sup>

- Teachers need support in integrating newcomer students in their classrooms and providing integrated English Language Development to those students. One interviewee, an English learner specialist, reported that they often encouraged teachers who were at a loss as to how to integrate and support their newcomer students by saying things like: *If you’re doing a project about erosion, the research can be in the student’s home language and the project can be presented in their home language. Remember: the student’s home language is the tool that he has right now, and you want him to learn the content. If we focus exclusively on English Language Development, our newcomer students will lose two years of content.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STATE

Finally, interviewees presented a series of recommendations to the State to expand and strengthen educator preparation to better serve the needs of multilingual learners and to increase their access to school programs and academic content.

Interviewees recommended that the State take the following actions:

- Require ongoing professional development for all educators who provide instruction to multilingual learners to ensure that they are up-to-date on the content knowledge, strategies and tools (including [EL RISE](#)<sup>24</sup> and the [English Learner Roadmap](#))<sup>25</sup> needed to serve them appropriately.
- Provide training to all educators across the state in culturally responsive and relevant frameworks and how to integrate culture and curriculum.
- Adapt educator preparation programs in recognition of newcomer students’ broad and varied needs to include guidance on how to assess their in-school and out-of-school needs and support their language and literacy development.
- Develop clear and standardized criteria to guide instructors in educator preparation programs as to the content and strategies that they need to cover to ensure that educators are equipped with the foundational knowledge and skills that they need to provide comprehensive instruction to multilingual students. The Commission’s Educator Preparation standards are available on their website and include the standards that they have developed and adopted following consultation with expert educators and review of recent research.<sup>26</sup>
- Offer funding to [Sobrato Early Academic Language](#) (SEAL), a program that provides professional development, technical assistance, and curriculum support, to guide school districts

across the state on how to use SEAL strategies to support multilingual learners' language and literacy development.<sup>27</sup>

- Use the [new bilingual authorization standards](#), which were revised in 2020 and 2021 due, in part, to the emergence of new research on multilingual education, as a guide to develop stronger multilingual learner authorization standards for multiple-subject, single-subject and education-specialist credentials, and ensure that these new standards include a course on English learner methodology and require candidates to gain clinical experience in a classroom of students that includes multilingual learners.<sup>28</sup>
- Issue guidance to all school districts that includes the following:
  - The difference between integrated and designated ELD, a reminder that all multilingual learners are required to receive both, and a description of the authorization that educators need to provide instruction in both settings.
  - A reminder that all teachers need to teach literacy regardless of what their content-area focus may be.
  - An explanation of [this table](#) of teacher authorizations and settings and the names and contact information of state agency staff members who can support districts, including human resources departments, in understanding the authorizations that teachers are required to have to teach in different instructional settings.<sup>29</sup>
  - The importance of adopting an asset-based rather than deficit-based lens in working with and uplifting multilingual learners to celebrate their experiences, cultures, and values.
- Provide a clear vision and strong leadership regarding what meaningful access to academic content and educational programs looks like for multilingual learners, including a strong ethnic studies component and a commitment to value and honor all students' languages, cultures, and heritages.
- Foster more cohesion within educator preparation programs, which would involve greater acknowledgement of the gaps that can exist between program goals and implementation. If the state required additional documentation from faculty regarding their course content and outcomes, might there be less disconnect between program goals and on-the-ground implementation?
- Provide funding and resources to foster stronger connections, data-sharing and collaborative practices between educator preparation programs and school districts. The goal is to support faculty and candidates in building a greater understanding of the real-life implications between course content and how that content translates to students' outcomes in the classroom.

## CONCLUSION

In some ways, interviewees painted a bleak picture of their experiences. Nearly all agreed that their educator preparation programs provided a mediocre foundation at best with respect to meeting multilingual learners' needs and facilitating their language and literacy development. They expressed concern about the lack of standardization in the instruction provided in educator preparation programs vis-à-vis multilingual learners, spoke woefully of district-provided professional development and their need to seek more robust professional development elsewhere, lamented the exclusion of newcomer students' needs from educator preparation programs and professional development opportunities, and shared worrying accounts of anti-immigrant and racist sentiment toward multilingual learners in some of the school communities in which they had worked.

Yet, one could also come away from these accounts with a sense of optimism. Despite the substandard preparation that interviewees received, they collaborated with and learned from their colleagues, valued, and celebrated their students' home languages, adapted their approaches, sought outside resources to strengthen their instruction and used their experiences to offer strong recommendations to the state as to how the state could create more equitable and inclusive structures for educators and multilingual learners going forward. As of 2015, students who spoke a language other than English in their homes [comprised nearly 2.5 million students, or more than 40% of the state's public-school enrollment](#).<sup>30</sup> These recommendations, if implemented, would go a long way toward ensuring that these students are provided the instruction they need and deserve to develop their language skills and thrive, and, above all, feel valued in their classrooms for their rich cultural and linguistic heritage.

## SECTION 2: THE PREPARATION OF BILINGUAL EDUCATORS

The bilingual education landscape is complex and has undergone a great deal of change and evolution in the past thirty years. Bilingual authorizations allow teachers [to provide instruction to multilingual learners in multiple settings, including instruction in primary language development](#).<sup>31</sup> What this means is that multilingual learners may develop their listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills in their primary language, such as Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin, French and Hmong, to name a few. If a teacher earns a bilingual authorization in Spanish, for example, they are authorized to provide instruction in primary language development to multilingual learners in Spanish.

[The number of bilingual authorization programs](#) peaked approximately thirty years ago, with more than 1,800 bilingual authorizations earned in the mid-1990s.<sup>32</sup> Following the passage of Proposition 227 in 1998, schools became far more constrained in offering bilingual authorization programs, and while bilingual authorizations continued to be issued, the total number issued each year dipped dramatically. Now, with the passage of Proposition 58 in 2016, restrictions against bilingual instruction have lifted, and schools have had far more freedom to offer bilingual or dual-immersion programs. Since then, [the number of bilingual authorizations issued has gently trended upwards](#), although has not yet reached the heights of the mid-1990s.<sup>33</sup>

Public Advocates interviewed faculty from eleven institutions of higher education with bilingual authorization programs. These bilingual authorization programs included programs awaiting accreditation, brand-new programs, established programs, programs with strong institutional support and programs in need of greater backing from their college or university administration.

### PROGRAM STRENGTHS AND INNOVATIONS

Faculty described several innovations and characteristics that they believe have made their programs successful and unique.

#### Strong Social Justice and Racial Justice Frameworks

Institutions such as California State University Fullerton (Fullerton) and San José State University (San José State) provided powerful accounts of their institutions' racial and social justice frameworks with respect to bilingual education. San José State's bilingual authorization program is called "Bilingüismo y Justicia" (Bilingualism and Justice) and stems from a profound and deeply held belief that linguistic justice is a human right. The [program's foundational courses](#) include courses on the sociology of education, language pedagogy and literacy development and seek to apply a critical lens with which to consider bilingual education in the United States and in the world at large.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Fullerton's College of Education operates within a [just, equitable and inclusive education framework](#), to which all courses are aligned.<sup>35</sup> The goal of the bilingual authorization program is not only to offer bilingualism and plurilingualism as a field of study but to do so with an explicit social justice impact. As part of this framework, Fullerton offers [anti-racism webinars](#)<sup>36</sup> on such topics as "The History of Anti-Racism Action in Education" and "Anti-Racist Teaching Practices" and also collaborates with [EL RISE and Californians Together](#)<sup>37</sup> to offer relevant workshops in a number of languages, including Vietnamese, Korean and Khmer, to support educators in improving and strengthening their instruction for all multilingual learners.

## **Affirmations of Multilingualism: Providing Instruction in the Target Language and Primary-language Support to Candidates**

The importance of offering strong primary-language support was a consistent theme across institutions. For example, Whittier College (Whittier) offers Spanish-language proficiency assessments to its candidates to determine their listening, speaking, reading, and writing proficiency, and if they need additional Spanish language support to strengthen those domains of language. They also collaborate with its Spanish department to offer refresher courses in Spanish for candidates who need them. In addition, multiple institutions, including California State University, San Marcos (San Marcos), and Fullerton spoke of the value and impact of teaching classes in the partner language, such as Spanish or Vietnamese, to ensure that teachers are fully prepared to enter the classroom and provide instruction to candidates in that language. Fullerton also highlighted the importance of offering undergraduate candidates in languages other than English; math and biology courses are currently offered in Spanish and the university plans to expand its course offerings to other languages in the coming year. Approximately 85-90 candidates graduate from Fullerton each year with multiple-subject, single-subject, and special education credentials and bilingual authorizations prepared to provide instruction to students in languages other than English.

Interviewees also shared how important it was to provide candidates with opportunities to take such courses as Chicano Studies and math in the partner language to build a holistic framework of learning a language. They described how such opportunities build candidates' confidence in their language skills and affirm their bilingualism by showing students that it is their strength. Interviewees shared that sometimes candidates understandably feel a bit insecure about their second-language skills and described how important strong and compassionate messaging is in such situations. They shared that their practice is to validate any fears or doubts that candidates may have about their second-language abilities, encourage them to adopt a growth mindset and assure them that faculty are on their side throughout their journey.

### **Individualized Support and Strong Interpersonal Relationships**

Interviewees shared extraordinary accounts of their efforts to provide individualized support to and build strong, interpersonal relationships with their candidates. UC Davis, for example, creates Candidate Improvement Plans, or CIPs, to destigmatize any need for assistance that students may have. Faculty use such plans to provide targeted assistance to candidates who may be experiencing difficulties in the program for any reason, including reasons unrelated to the program itself. UCLA's Summer Intensive for Bilingual Authorization has a strong cohort model through which instructors meet daily with candidates throughout the duration of the program. If candidates are not quite ready to enter the classroom by the conclusion of the program, instructors will work with them and invite them to reteach their lesson until they pass and are ready to enter the classroom. Fullerton perceives its work with candidates as an investment in lifelong learning and, as such, continues to prepare candidates even after they graduate by supporting them in their new classrooms and hosting workshops for them to attend post-graduation.

### **Innovative Program Designs**

In addition to commenting on their programs' strong social and racial justice frameworks, interviewees also described other innovations. California State University, Los Angeles, for example,

has an [Urban Learning Program](#), through which undergraduate students can earn an undergraduate degree and a teaching credential at the same time via a four-year Integrated Teacher Education Preparation (ITEP) program, which prepares them to teach at an urban school in the Greater Los Angeles area. The program offers candidates the option to earn either a multiple-subject credential, an education-specialist credential or both through an accelerated program. Additionally, a new bilingual option, which will focus on the holistic preparation of bilingual multiple subject teachers, is being created to streamline the bilingual added authorization.

UC Davis also caters to undergraduates via a program called [Multilingual Education for California](#), which is in its third year and which seeks to create a cohort of prospective Spanish-English K-12 bilingual education teachers and education advocates.<sup>38</sup> The program includes four courses in such topics as “Spanish for Education” and “Introduction to Latin-American Culture” as well as an internship opportunity at dual-immersion programs in the area.

Loyola Marymount University (LMU) offers an undergraduate and a graduate-level [bilingual authorization in Spanish and Mandarin](#)<sup>39</sup> and a bilingual certificate program, also in [Spanish](#)<sup>40</sup> and [Mandarin](#),<sup>41</sup> and available both to teachers with bilingual authorizations and those seeking to earn them in the future. The bilingual authorization may include such courses as “Bilingualism and Bilingualism” or “Methodology for Chinese Language Instruction in Bilingual Settings.” The certificate programs also provide teachers with intensive professional development and practical skills to take back to their classrooms, as well as continuing education credits and the possibility to move up the salary scale at their respective districts.

### Asian Language Consortium

The CSU Language Asian Consortium was developed and established by the Center for Language Minority Education and Research (CLMER) at California State University, Long Beach in 1996. It is now hosted by Fullerton and has provided unique opportunities for candidates enrolled in credential programs across the state to earn a bilingual authorization in one of several Asian languages. When the Asian Language Consortium first started, teachers from five California State Universities in the Los Angeles Area came together to earn their bilingual authorization in person over four weekends. Then, in the face of great need across the state, including requests from teachers who wanted to fly back and forth to Greater Los Angeles area to earn their authorization, the program began offering courses online. The program now shares resources among the ten California State University campuses that comprise the consortium to enable enrolled teachers to take classes at any of these campuses within the consortium to earn their bilingual authorization in an Asian language, including Cantonese, Hmong, Korean, Mandarin and Vietnamese. Now there is greater access for teachers across the state to participate in the program and earn their bilingual authorization in an Asian language. In addition, Fullerton [hosts the National Resource Center for Asian Languages](#), which was established in 2014 and boosts the United States’ capacity for teaching and learning, including Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, and Khmer.<sup>42</sup> Fullerton offers bilingual authorization programs in Korean and Vietnamese during the summer session and soon plans to expand its offerings to include Khmer.

### Development of Intentional Learning Partnerships

Multiple institutions described the value that strong learning partnerships with institutions of higher education in other countries added to their programs. For example, San Marcos offers a

partnership with the Universidad del Norte in Colombia that includes a bilingual course offering in English and Spanish to (1) instill in candidates the value of building connections beyond their backyard, and (2) build a deeper understanding of diversity and history through the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), which links classrooms of two or more higher education institutions in different countries. San Marcos also collaborates with the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala through the International Education and Resource Network (iEARN) to integrate curriculum based on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals with future teachers. In addition, they offer a summer study abroad program at the Universidad de Valladolid in Spain for teachers of Spanish and bilingual teacher candidates.

## POSITIVE PROGRAM ADAPTATIONS DURING THE PANDEMIC

### Transitioning to an Online Program

Several interviewees described positive and fruitful transitions to virtual program delivery models during the pandemic. For example, one institution described how transitioning their program to a virtual model opened doors for more candidates interested in earning their bilingual authorization. Prior to the transition, most people who attended the institution’s program were local – now, with a virtual program option, the program’s participants include more candidates from farther afield. Another program shared that following a period of coordination between departments to facilitate the program’s transition to a virtual program delivery model, the online program enjoyed a lot of success, received good reviews, and had still been able to meet [the twenty-hours-of-fieldwork requirement for bilingual authorization candidates](#).<sup>43</sup> A third program that primarily serves candidates in rural areas described how they sought and received certification as a distance-learning program and now offer three sections of each class: two in-person options and one always-online option to provide access to all interested candidates, including those in rural areas who might not otherwise be able to participate. The program also collaborates with districts for support with student teaching placements and endeavors to place all students in district placements close to where they live. In addition, this program offers hybrid options for its in-person classes to ensure that candidates who are ill or must miss class can join class virtually and “not miss a beat.” A fourth program described how virtual instruction had created additional opportunities for program recruitment through “cafécitos,” and a chance to pop into Zoom rooms to share program flyers and build connections.

### Adding Additional Credential Options, including Single-Subject and Education-Specialist Credentials

Interviewees discussed the importance of offering additional credential options beside multiple-subject credentials. One interviewee spoke with pride about the expansion of their program to include single-subject credential options and described the demand for teachers with bilingual authorizations in secondary classrooms. Another interviewee articulated their hope of soon expanding their institution’s program to include education-specialist credential options and described the need to provoke a culture shift among district partners who had expressed uncertainty as to how necessary bilingually authorized education specialists were. The interviewee affirmed that a review of relevant research—as well as conversations with families who had expressed consternation at their teachers’ difficulties in attending to the needs of their Spanish-speaking

students with Section 504 plans and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)—had demonstrated how important it was for their institution to initiate the planning process to begin offering bilingual authorization add-ons to education specialists in the future. The interviewee stressed how important it was to continue to surface the need statewide for more education specialists with bilingual authorizations who would be uniquely suited to provide primary-language support to students with Section 504 plans and IEPs, as well as their families, and pave the way for equal access to educational programs and activities for Spanish-speaking students with disabilities.

### **Using Online Platforms to Meet Program Objectives**

One interviewee described how their institution had rethought how it conducted assessments during the pandemic. The team elected to conduct group interviews over Zoom and authentically assess candidates' Spanish skills by having them create a lesson, take pictures, and teach each other. The interviewee reported that the new format had worked so well that they did not think that the institution would revert to an in-person assessment model in the future.

## **INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES**

Interviewees described a variety of institutional challenges that have complicated their ability to sustain their bilingual authorization programs. They spoke in unison about their volume of work and the myriad additional responsibilities they have taken on without compensation to support and sustain their programs and candidates out of a passion for their work, as well as their fear that their programs would falter or even crumble altogether if they left or retired. More than anything, they pleaded for additional funding and faculty to support their efforts to keep their programs afloat.

### **Provision of Release Time**

Several interviewees emphasized the inconsistent provision of release time to faculty—which is the time that faculty members are released from teaching and other duties to focus on other responsibilities—as a barrier to the growth and sustainability of their programs. They also highlighted the inequitable nature of release time across the California State University (CSU) system: some campuses offer six units of release time to faculty; others offer four units; still others offer three units; and several campuses offer zero units of release time (although program coordinators sometimes receive additional pay for their work). Interviewees expressed concern about these stark inequities as well as their fervent wish that release time be provided consistently and equitably across the CSU system.

### **Additional Faculty to Increase the Sustainability of Bilingual Authorization Programs**

Interviewees spoke with one voice about their high teaching loads, myriad responsibilities and the need for additional faculty and designated program coordinators to support the sustainability of their programs. One interviewee described the quest for faculty to meet candidates' needs as a “dire situation,” and shared how multiple departments competed for one faculty position: if a faculty member in the college of education left, it was unlikely that the faculty member would be replaced. Another interviewee emphasized the need for full-time faculty to move projects forward; adjunct faculty alone were insufficient to meet the program's needs. Several interviewees wished that designated program coordinators could be hired to oversee bilingual authorization programs and create more space in faculty schedules for instruction and other related responsibilities.

## Time and Capacity to Procure and Review Data

Multiple interviewees highlighted the importance of data in driving decision-making. One interviewee described the value their program placed on the results of student surveys regarding their experiences in the program. Another interviewee also highlighted the importance of data and wished their program had more staff capacity to review and analyze program-related data. A third interviewee shared that their program had adopted an effective data-driven approach to decision-making, tracked student enrollment and graduation rates and circulated student surveys. A question that arose during interviews was whether an incentive system could increase the rate at which candidates completed and returned surveys so institutions could learn from the survey data and make changes to their programs in response to candidates' feedback and observations.

## REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE AND RESOURCES FROM STATE AGENCIES

Interviewees provided detailed recommendations to state agencies and outlined several requests for assistance. Some of these recommendations and requests for assistance were directed toward the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and others toward the State more generally.

### Recommendations for the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (Commission) is an agency in the executive branch of California State Government. [Its primary purposes are fourfold](#): to (1) serve as the state standards board for educator preparation in California, (2) oversee credentialing and licensing for California educators, (3) enforce educators' professional practices and (4) investigate and resolve discipline-related issues involving credentialed educators.<sup>44</sup> The Commission's responsibilities include overseeing the accreditation of bilingual authorization programs across the state.

#### 1. More Commission Staff to Support Bilingual Authorization Programs

Interviewees spoke highly of Commission staff who had provided support to bilingual authorization programs but wished that there were more such staff. One interviewee described how helpful it would be to have one designated staff member at the Commission whose full-time responsibilities included coordinating bilingual authorization programs across the state and triaging requests for assistance.

#### 2. Further Resources and Guidance to Bilingual Authorization Programs, Particularly Newer Programs

Institutions, particularly newer institutions, requested a more streamlined approval process and additional resources and support to successfully navigate the process. In particular, they requested:

- A clearinghouse of exemplars of approved programs to which they could refer.
- A referral-and-support process, whereby the Commission connects institutions that seek accreditation of their bilingual authorization programs around the same time so institutions can collaborate and assist each other.

- A dedicated portal on the Commission website dedicated to the bilingual education landscape in California that programs across the state, regardless of their years of operation, could consult to learn more about best practices for growing and sustaining their programs, gather information about strong dual-immersion programs across the state and identify educational partners, among other things.
- That any problems or concerns identified during the accreditation process be handled delicately so as not to jeopardize the status of programs for which support for bilingual education may already be tenuous at the institutional level.
- Sensitivity with respect to the politics behind accreditation and an understanding that bilingual education is not yet universally beloved and appreciated; doubts persist across the state regarding its value, and, as such, the accreditation process can be make-or-break for an institution.

### 3. Further Reflection on Tests as a Barrier to Access

Several interviewees expressed concern about the extent to which tests pose a barrier to access to diverse, bilingual candidates earning their teaching credential and/or bilingual authorization and entering the classroom. Interviewees shared the following concerns and requests:

- Some candidates have been unable to pass the [CSET, or California Subject Examinations for Teachers](#).<sup>45</sup> Could new and creative approaches be considered to support candidates in earning their authorization?
- Candidates need to pass several tests to earn their credential (e.g., the CSET, the [Reading Instruction Competence Assessment, or RICA](#),<sup>46</sup> and the California Teaching Performance Assessment, or TPA, which is an assessment of teaching performance required for educators to earn a preliminary credential).<sup>47</sup> Could consideration be given as to whether so many tests are necessary?
- Could the TPA be revisited as to whether it is the optimal tool for candidates to demonstrate their bilingualism? Could individual institutions instead assess their own candidates as they are uniquely positioned to do so reliably? An example of an institution-specific TPA, used exclusively at California State University, Fresno, is [the Fresno Assessment of Student Teachers](#), or FAST.<sup>48</sup>
- It has been challenging for candidates who live in rural areas to travel to test sites to take the [California Basic Educational Skills Test, or CBEST](#), and the CSET.<sup>49</sup> What steps could be taken to provide stronger support to candidates based in rural areas with less access to examination facilities?
- Giving candidates the tools that they need to pass their exams is also a social justice issue; programs simply cannot send candidates out into the world without the tools to be successful. Could we reframe the way we approach exams as a social justice issue?

#### 4. Accreditation, School Facilities and Fundraising

One interviewee described how institutional fundraising may not include colleges of education. As such, program facilities may fall into disrepair and not enjoy the same upkeep, maintenance and improvements as other colleges and departments on campus. The interviewee requested that the Commission’s accreditation process also include an examination of the condition of school facilities and recommendations for improvement, as appropriate. If the Commission’s review process also considered the state of a school’s facilities, any proposed recommendations noted in their findings could facilitate institutional requests for additional internal or external funding to be earmarked toward structural improvements and renovations as well as materials or supplies that colleges of education might need.

#### Recommendations for the State

##### 1. Shifting the Narrative Around Teaching as a Profession and Prioritizing a Positive Public Relations Campaign

A theme that emerged in conversations with interviewees was the current narrative surrounding teaching as a profession and the importance of reimagining and redefining the stories we tell about teaching as a career. Public opinion has waxed and waned during the pandemic regarding the teaching profession. At the start of the pandemic, teachers were honored and revered, [considered heroic](#), and lauded for their leadership and perseverance.<sup>50</sup> As the pandemic continued, [more and more factions targeted](#) and blamed teachers for students’ difficulties.<sup>51</sup> [The nationwide educator shortage](#) has become increasingly acute during the pandemic, with scores of educators leaving the profession and just as many prospective educators electing not to enter it.<sup>52</sup> What could the State’s role be in shifting the narrative around teaching, highlighting the meaningful and impactful work that educators do, and encouraging more service-minded individuals, including those with proficiency in more than one language, to pursue teaching as a career? Could the State prioritize a public relations campaign for teaching and highlight the financial assistance available to market the profession as the beautiful and impactful career it could be, coupled with reflections on the profound and long-lasting impact on children of having skilled, loving, and devoted educators to teach and guide them – particularly early in their educational journeys?

##### 2. Further Consideration of the Role of the State Seal of Biliteracy

Multiple interviewees referenced the unique opportunity created by the [State Seal of Biliteracy](#) (SSB), an award that schools or districts bestow on students who have attained proficiency in two or more languages by the time they graduate from high school.<sup>53</sup> More and more students are earning the SSB; over 47,000 students in California did so in 2018. However, these increasing numbers of SSB earners do not necessarily translate to more candidates pursuing their teaching credential and bilingual authorization. What was the intention behind the SSB? Could more be done at the state and local level to elevate the SSB as a vehicle with which to encourage bilingual high school graduates to pursue a career in teaching?

### 3. Strong and Consistent Messaging to Show Universal Support for Bilingual Education

Multiple interviewees spoke thoughtfully about their wish that the State voice unequivocal support for bilingual education. Institutions differed widely in their acknowledgment of and appreciation for bilingual authorization programs. Some interviewees shared that they had the full support of their institutions in growing their bilingual authorization programs. Others described the tenuous nature of their programs and their struggle to obtain consistent institutional support. Interviewees expressed hope that a strong and consistent message from the State in support of bilingual education could bolster their respective programs.

### 4. Distribute Funding with an Equity Lens

Interviewees also discussed the need for more targeted funding toward bilingual authorization programs to enable them to hire designated program coordinators, expand the number of full-time faculty and reduce the teaching and administrative burdens on existing faculty. They emphasized how important it was that funds be distributed to programs with an equity lens that accounted for the fact that some programs are more established than others, have stronger institutional backing and more robust student enrollments. To ensure that all existing programs can thrive and succeed, interviewees believed that the State needs to take such disparities into account in allocating funding, and to build their own capacity to manage funding allocations so that bilingual authorization programs can thrive.

### 5. Additional Financial Support for Candidates

Several interviewees discussed the dire need for additional funding for teacher candidates to support them in meeting the considerable expenses of their credential programs and offsetting those costs, to some degree. They described the many strengths of their respective programs—including strong, personalized relationships with faculty, primary-language support, career guidance and post-graduation workshops—and the expenses associated with those services, especially at private universities. Interviewees strongly recommended that the State allocate funds to cover the cost of candidates' credential or, at the very least, allocate stipends for candidates, such as \$2000 to cover the cost of students' bilingual authorization add-on. Interviewees also described the accommodations that their institutions had made to reduce candidates' costs. For example, one interviewee described how their institution used e-books to reduce costs for candidates. Another described how their institution covered the cost of the bilingual authorization add-on but as the funds to do so came out of the institution's budget—and were not generated by candidates' fees—the institution was never quite sure if they could manage it and needed to ask itself annually if they could still afford to incur the expense on behalf of candidates. Interviewees believed that if the State led the way in making funding available to cover more of candidates' credentialing costs, there would be less burden on individual institutions to make accommodations and incur expenses on behalf of candidates to facilitate their ability to complete their credentialing programs and enter the classroom.

### 6. Support from the CSU Office of the Chancellor

Several interviewees expressed hope that the CSU Office of the Chancellor would unequivocally affirm its support for bilingual education and bilingual authorization programs

across the state. One interviewee discussed the need for institutional support from the Office of the Chancellor to keep the CSUs together as a bilingual consortium. Another interviewee expressed hope that the CSU system would lend its support toward the goal for more bilingual teachers by 2030. The interviewee also referenced the universal need for release time across the CSU system and believed that if the Office of the Chancellor encouraged the Deans that had not yet offered release time to the faculty in the bilingual authorization programs to do so, those Deans would acquiesce. Finally, the interviewee expressed hope that the CSU system would require bilingual authorization programs in areas where multilingual communities were prevalent. The interviewee wished that there were a formula whereby the State required the existence and maintenance of bilingual authorization programs in areas where the most widely spoken languages in California were prevalent, such as Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Arabic.

## 7. Conversations about Faculty Academic Freedom and Concrete Curricular Requirements

One interviewee encouraged further conversations with faculty and administrators at institutions of higher education about the ongoing debate between faculty academic freedom and concrete curricular requirements in educator preparation programs. The interviewee spoke passionately about the need to balance faculty academic freedom with adequate educator preparation, as well as the importance of establishing a minimum curricular threshold in educator preparation programs to ensure that educators were fully prepared upon entering the classroom. The interviewee discussed the real-life implications for students and families if educators began teaching without a solid grasp of the content and instructional strategies necessary to support students in building their English language proficiency and reclassifying. They also discussed the moral and ethical responsibility associated with adequate educator preparation, a concept that did not necessarily align with faculty academic freedom in all respects. In addition, they commented on how troubling it was to hear faculty in educator preparation programs insist that they would teach whatever they wanted in class. Finally, they reflected on how prioritizing and increasing faculty diversity could play a critical role in mitigating the degree to which faculty privilege may manifest as academic freedom and autonomy to the detriment of educators and students.

## 8. Ongoing Funding for the Asian Language Consortium

One interviewee shared the good news in the Governor’s 2022-23 budget for bilingual programs: [\\$5 million in support of Asian-language bilingual education programs](#) in California.<sup>54</sup> They explained what a tremendous and much-needed investment this was, but that it was simply not enough. To illustrate the point, they shared that [of the more than 1,100 bilingual authorizations issued during the 2020-2021 school year, only 93 were issued in an Asian language](#).<sup>55</sup> And yet, the [second and third most widely spoken languages](#) by students in California are Asian languages: Vietnamese and Mandarin.<sup>56</sup> This translates to nearly 100,000 multilingual learners who speak Vietnamese and Mandarin alone but far too few teachers with bilingual authorizations in those languages to guide those students and support their growth. Without more funding to target Asian-language bilingual education programs as a high-need area in which greater numbers of authorized teachers are

sorely needed, few multilingual learners who speak Asian languages at home will be able to benefit from the meaningful learning and cultural enrichment opportunity that comes with having a teacher who speaks their home language and is authorized to provide instruction to them in that language.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Finally, interviewees shared many thoughtful observations and lessons learned regarding their experiences growing and sustaining bilingual authorization programs across the state:

### 1. Understanding the Landscape of Bilingual Education

Several interviewees reflected on the shifting bilingual education landscape and the challenges associated with managing and navigating public sentiment about bilingual education. One noted that despite the passage of Proposition 58, California had not “turned bilingual” by any means; not all deans and education programs were friendly toward bilingual education programs. Another remarked that the State had entered a bilingual education renaissance of sorts, as bilingual education now attracts candidates who might not have otherwise considered teaching before. Several interviewees talked about the strength of the cohort model in building a sense of community enveloped in language that they also may not have otherwise enjoyed before.

### 2. Centering Mission and Vision

Several interviewees rooted the success of their programs in their strong mission and vision. As stated above, these programs affirm linguistic justice, bilingualism and plurilingualism as essential values that propel their programs forward and provide them and their candidates with a coherent vision and mission with which to align their education and teaching values.

### 3. Transparency as a Strength

Interviewees shared that part of the reason why their programs enjoyed such success was because they were transparent about how their programs could benefit candidates and equally transparent about what their programs did not provide. For example, one interviewee shared that faculty communicated honestly to candidates that earning their credential wouldn’t make them millionaires but would make them eminently more hireable with bilingual authorizations and greater cultural capital. Other interviewees also discussed how hireable their graduates were and how much local districts valued their candidates’ bilingual skills.

### 4. Connection to Candidates’ Sense of Community

Several interviewees discussed how their programs fostered a sense of internal community and how they also made a concerted effort to foster candidate connections with the communities around them. One program described how faculty tapped into candidates’ inner sense of motivation and connection to the community they would build by becoming bilingual teachers. Another program stated that it was important for institutions, candidates, and communities to come together in support of initiatives such as dual-immersion programs. If, for example, an institution that offered bilingual authorizations

were eager to set the stage for a dual-immersion program in a neighboring district, it was important to go to the community to garner support for such a program as a critical initial step.

## 5. Understanding the Role that Healing Plays in Bilingual Education

Multiple interviewees shared thoughtful reflections about how bilingual authorization cohorts promoted unique healing among their members. One interviewee, for example, discussed how many program participants were bureaucratically labeled “English learners” during their K-12 years. As such, a key aspect of the program was to support these candidates in discovering and celebrating their multicultural identities and foster healing. The interviewee noted how the program also supported candidates in learning how to advocate for their needs in largely white spaces—a topic about which more than one interviewee who identified as a woman of color spoke passionately in conjunction with their own journeys for greater acknowledgement and equitable compensation.

## CONCLUSION

This qualitative research study shows that faculty in bilingual authorization programs across the state are devoted to their programs and candidates, provide resources and support to candidates both during their program experiences and after graduation, take on additional responsibilities without compensation and are even afraid to leave their positions for fear that the program that they have led, developed, and sustained may crumble in their absence.

Our hope is that this short policy brief illuminates the accomplishments, passion and struggles of bilingual educators and educators of multilingual learners across the state. Most importantly, we hope that it paves the way for stronger state policies and investments to support bilingual authorization programs and equips greater numbers of teachers with the skills and expertise to serve California’s multilingual learners.

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