



Unpacking Best Practices for Preparing Teachers for Early Childhood and Multilingual Learners

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Links to Resources

[The National Center for Teacher Residencies](#) (NCTR) hosted a webinar on April 30, 2026, the third in our Transforming Educator Preparation Webinar series. The webinar was in collaboration with [Ensemble Learning](#). Webinar attendees explored how leaders, practitioners, and partners from educator preparation programs are coming together to share innovative strategies and research-based practices shaping the future of teacher preparation. Participants gained insight into strengthening early childhood educator readiness, supporting multilingual learners (MLL) through targeted instructional approaches, and aligning preparation programs with the evolving needs of classrooms and communities.

Our expert panel, listed below, shared insights describing best and promising practices for preparing early childhood teachers serving multilingual learners.

- **Dr. Adriana Cervantes-González**, Program Manager - Residency Programs, Tulare County Office of Education
- **Sarah Galloway**, Program Manager, AppleTree Early Learning Teacher Residency
- **Dr. Elizet Kneisler**, Assistant Professor of Practice, The University of Texas at Austin
- **Dr. Julie Lara**, Managing Director, Multilingual Programs, Ensemble Learning
- **Dr. Xóchitl Rocha**, Director of Bilingual Education & G/T Programs, Texas Education Agency

NOTE: The content and resources NCTR shares should not be considered as an endorsement or legal guidance. Please consult your own legal counsel for any guidance you may need.

FAQs from the Webinar

Question: Can you share the PowerPoint from the webinar?

Answer: Sure, we are happy to share the Unpacking Best Practices for Preparing Teachers for Early Childhood and Multilingual Learners [PowerPoint linked here](#). Please reach out to us to inquire about other resources [through our website](#).

Question: For Dr. Rocha, as we think about alignment of credentials across systems early childhood education (ECE) and K-12, how do we reconcile the pay parity challenges when upskilling ECE staff to reach those credentials?

Answer: Great question, one that many bilingual teachers ask- if “una persona que habla dos idiomas vale por dos,” therefore “a bilingual teacher that teaches in two languages should be paid more,” and therefore, a good recruitment effort is stipends and higher pay to hire and retain. In Texas, school systems can leverage their Bilingual Education Allotment (BEA) funds for stipends and also to prepare teachers to become certified. Last year, the legislature approved waiving the test fees for bilingual certification (first attempt).

Question: I am an instructional and leadership coach at a school with over 60% multilingual learners. I would love to get a recommendation for 1-2 seminal texts on language acquisition and best practices in the classroom for my staff to use in a book study. Thanks!

Answer: In a school with a high percentage of multilingual learners, it is powerful to ground a book study in both the research behind language acquisition and the instructional strategies that make a difference in classrooms.

A book recommended is “How Languages Are Learned” by Patsy Lightbown and Nina Spada. This text is a foundational work in second language acquisition and effectively makes complex research accessible for educators. It helps build a shared understanding of how language develops over time while addressing common misconceptions and connecting theory to classroom practice.

To complement this, “Making Content Comprehensible for Multilingual Learners: The SIOP Model” by Jana Echevarría, MaryEllen Vogt, and Deborah Short is a highly practical

resource. It translates research into clear instructional strategies that teachers across all content areas can implement immediately, with a strong focus on scaffolding, language objectives, and making grade-level content accessible.

Together, these two texts provide an effective balance: the "why" behind language acquisition and the "how" of supporting multilingual learners in daily instruction. This combination tends to make book studies particularly impactful for staff.

Another text to consider is, "Principles and Practices in Second Language Acquisition," by Stephen Krashen. This text is very well revered by MLL researchers and educators.

Question: This is wonderful. In Illinois, where I work, the state is expanding bilingual services across mixed ECE settings. While schools are setting, it also includes community-based and childcare centers. Curious to hear whether payment incentives apply to those settings as well?

Answer: That's such an important question, and honestly, one that a lot of states, including Illinois, are still actively working through as they expand bilingual services across mixed delivery systems.

What we're seeing in Illinois right now is that incentives do exist across early childhood settings, but they are not always structured as a single statewide bilingual pay incentive that applies uniformly across schools, community-based programs, and child care centers.

For example, Illinois already provides financial incentives that reach beyond school-based settings, particularly through systems like ExceleRate Illinois. In that model, community-based and child care programs can receive financial add-ons and quality improvement funds, especially if they participate in state systems like the Child Care Assistance Program. Those incentives explicitly include licensed child care centers, family child care, and community-based collaborations, not just public schools.

At the same time, Illinois is also investing in the early childhood workforce pipeline through things like scholarships and credentials, including ESL and bilingual credentials for early educators, which are recognized across settings, not just in districts.

Where things are still evolving is specific bilingual pay incentives tied directly to language skills. Recent state efforts, like dual language expansion work, do emphasize building and retaining a bilingual workforce, but much of the policy conversation is still focused on identifying funding mechanisms and workforce strategies, rather than a fully unified, cross-setting stipend or bonus structure.

So, the short answer is that there are incentives that apply across community-based and child care settings in Illinois, but they tend to be tied to quality ratings, credentials, and workforce development, rather than a single, consistent bilingual payment that follows educators across all settings, at least not yet.

It is definitely a space to watch, especially as the state continues to expand bilingual and dual language programming. Illinois is moving toward a more integrated approach, and compensation structures are very much part of that ongoing conversation.

For More Information

Please visit [NCTR's website](#) to learn more about how to prepare early childhood teachers to serve multilingual learners. Please reach out to Jill Pitner at jpitner@nctresidencies.org; she will gladly support your other inquiries and connect you to more resources.