

NATIONAL CENTER FOR

**TEACHER  
RESIDENCIES**

# Teacher Preparation Webinar #3

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

April 30, 2026



Christian Watkins is a teacher resident at Memphis Teacher Residency. This picture was taken at Dunbar Elementary School.

# Agenda

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1. Welcome
2. Preparing Teachers for Multilingual Learners
3. Panel Discussion
4. Closing



Kaori Anderson-Walker is a teacher resident at Philadelphia Teacher Residency. This picture was taken at Boys Latin Charter School.

# Engagement Today!

- Use the chat feature to communicate with hosts and to share questions for the panelists. If your question is not answered in real time, please check back on our website and we will include an FAQ.
- The webinar today will be recorded and shared out with you via email along with resources, however, we do not allow AI bots.



A teacher resident works in a classroom with students as part of the Arizona Teacher Residency Program.

# Welcome and Introductions



**Shannon Black**

Managing Director of  
Programs, Design Academy



**Eduardo Lara**

Director of Programs



## Partnership & Design

**Resident Recruitment & Selection**



**Residency Leadership**



**Training Site Recruitment, Selection, & Support**



**Mentor Recruitment, Selection, & Support**



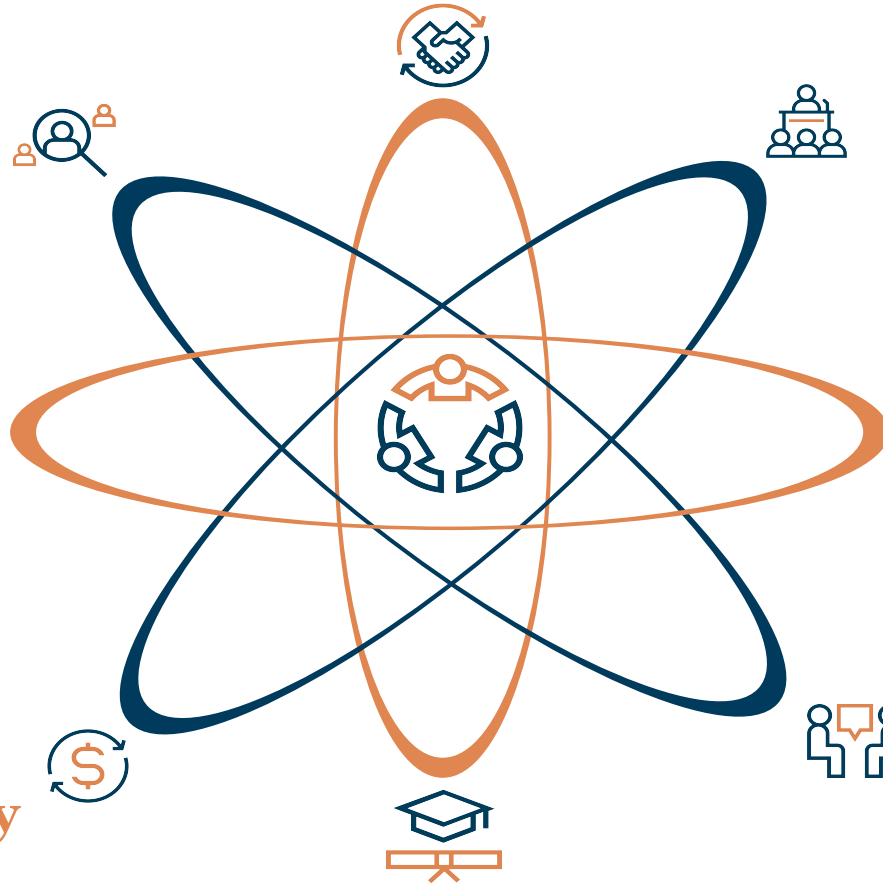
**Graduate Support**



**Financial Sustainability**



**Residency Year Experience**





# Preparing Teachers for Multilingual Learners

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# Essential Question

What are the best and promising practices for preparing early childhood teachers serving multilingual learners?



# Ensemble Learning Team



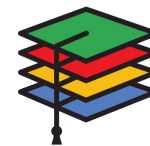
**Dr. Julie Lara**  
Managing Director,  
Multilingual Programs



**Eileen Salinas**  
Multilingual Learner Specialist

# Designing for Language in Early Childhood Classrooms

*Preparing Teachers to Support Multilingual Learners*



**ensemble learning**

Unlocking equity for all English learners



# Objectives:

- Understand how language is developed in early childhood for multilingual learners
- Explore an instructional strategy that integrates evidence-based instruction + language development
- Name actions that systems-level teacher educators can employ to ensure residency teachers are effective in supporting MLLs





Language development is a process; not a straight line.



# Stages of Second Language Acquisition



# Stages of Language Acquisition

<i>Proficiency Level</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
Beginning	Often characterized as the “silent period”. Beginning to develop speaking skills.
Early Intermediate	Typically produces words and phrases in social and academic situations that describe very common objects.
Intermediate	Produces sentences with errors that do not impede communication.
Proficient	Proficient Produces mostly grammatically correct sentences
Above Proficient	Produces mostly grammatically correct sentences in academic situations.

Instruction remains at grade level regardless of the student's stage in language acquisition.

# Early Childhood: Respect the “Silent Period”

In early childhood, this often looks like:

- pointing instead of speaking
- using gestures
- repeating words
- Blending languages to make meaning (translanguage)



## **CHARACTERISTICS:**

Students have very few oral skills and may only respond nonverbally by pointing, gesturing, nodding, or drawing.

## **APPROX TIME FRAME:**

0 - 6 months

## **TEACHER PROMPTS:**

Show me...

Circle the...

Where is...?

Who has ...?

## **VOCABULARY:**

500 known words

## **ABLE TO:**

Observe, Listen, Locate,  
Label, Match, Show,  
Classify, Categorize

**Consideration:** Ask students to draw, match, or use physical response as checks for understanding.

Students need lots of comprehensible input  
*BEFORE* they produce spoken language  
responses.

# From Language Development → Instructional Design

Language development must be made visible  
through instruction.

# Learning Design: Evolving Our Approach

Teacher preparation has traditionally emphasized:

- Instructional strategies

And is now expanding to include:

- Intentional design for language + content integration
- Sequencing language development within instruction
- Planning for access alongside rigor



Strong instruction happens when strategy + design work together.



# Instructional Core

What **Teachers** Must Be Prepared to Do:

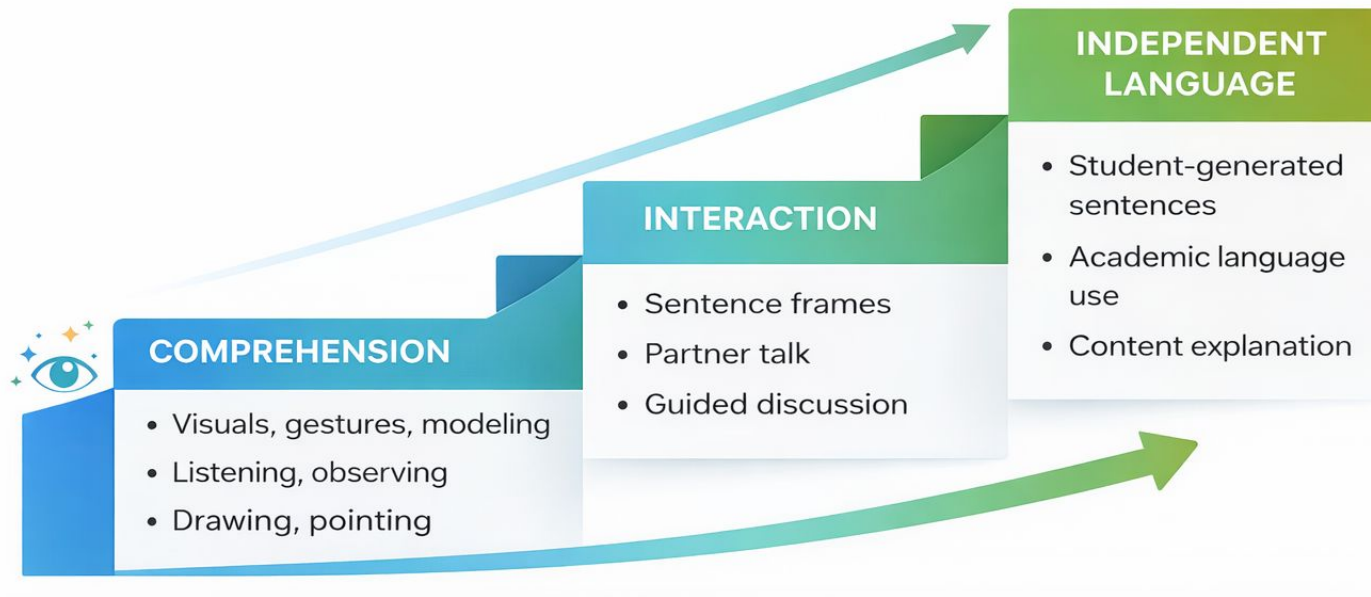
1. **Design for Oracy**  
Structured, intentional student talk
2. **Ensure Comprehensible Input**  
Meaning before production
3. **Maintain Rigor + Access**  
Grade-level content with supports





# Designing Along a Language Development Continuum

## Gradual Release of Language



Language is developed through intentional design, not by chance.

# Tier 1 Instructional Strategy



# Analyzing Instructional Design

## Example: Picture Walk

This routine demonstrates:

- Gradual release of language
- Comprehension before production
- Structured interaction
- Cultural & linguistic responsiveness

*Turn and Talk with your “shoulder partner”...*



*I notice...*

*I think...*

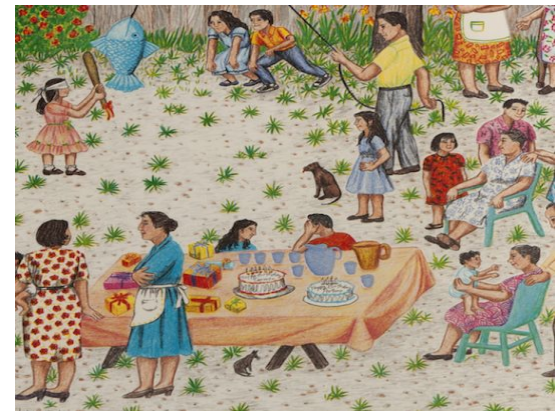
*I wonder...*

*My prediction is...*



# Analyzing Instructional Design, Contd.

- beginning instruction in a way that allows **ALL** students to participate actively and meaningfully.
- ...explicitly planning for and implementing supports that build both receptive (listening) and productive (speaking) oral language use
- ...increasing **student-student** interactions in the language of instruction
- ...decreasing teacher talk





# Teacher Educator: In the Field

Leaders can look for evidence of:

- Student talk > teacher talk
- Structured supports visible
- Evidence of understanding before speaking
- Grade-level rigor maintained





# Teacher Educator: Leadership & Instruction

Preparation programs can continue building toward:

- Understanding of language development in practice
- Intentional planning for language + content integration
- Opportunities to design and rehearse structured interaction
- Feedback focused on student language use and growth
- Strong alignment between coursework and clinical experience





# MLL - Key Takeaway

We create content access by structuring opportunities for students to use language.





# Expert Panelists

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What are the best and promising practices for preparing early childhood teachers serving multi-lingual learners?



# Panel of Experts



**Dr. Julie Lara**

Managing Director, Multilingual Programs  
Ensemble Learning



**Dr. Elizet Kneisler**

Assistant Professor of Practice,  
The University of Texas at Austin



**Dr. Xóchitl Rocha**

Director of Bilingual Education &  
G/T Programs, Texas Education Agency



**Dr. Adriana Cervantes-González**

Program Manager - Residency Programs,  
Tulare County Office of Education



**Sarah Galloway**

Program Manager, AppleTree Early Learning Teacher Residency



# Closing

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- ❑ **Language development is foundational**  
Multilingual learners build language through meaningful interaction, exposure, and intentional support in early childhood settings.
- ❑ **Instruction must be integrated and intentional**  
Effective teaching combines evidence-based instructional practices with purposeful language development strategies.
- ❑ **System-level support matters**  
Teacher educators play a critical role in equipping residency teachers with the tools, training, and structures needed to support multilingual learners.

# THANK YOU!

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To learn more, please visit our website.



**NCTR**

**[www.nctresidencies.org](http://www.nctresidencies.org)**

## Important to Note

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