



NATIONAL CENTER ON
IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION POLICY

***Ensuring Effective Language Access
Services and Policies in Early
Childhood Programs***

October 12, 2022



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Today's Release



Overlooked but Essential Language Access in Early Childhood Programs

OCTOBER 2022

BY MAKI PARK, JACOB HOFSTETTER, AND IVANA TÚ NHI GIANG

Executive Summary

Years of research suggest that Dual Language Learners (DLLs)—young children with at least one parent who speaks a language other than English in the home—stand to benefit disproportionately from early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs. However, substantial evidence also shows that DLLs participate in many ECEC programs at lower rates than non-DLL children, despite being significantly more likely to experience poverty and other risk factors that make them important targets for such programs. Examining the factors that can either help or hinder DLL families from accessing ECEC programs is thus critical to supporting these children's language development and future academic success.

Language can play a particularly important role in facilitating access. Nearly half of all DLLs, about 3.3 million children, have at least one parent who reports speaking English "less than very well." For these Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents, language barriers to accessing early childhood services are often compounded by other obstacles, including lower levels of formal education and limited access to digital technology and the internet. Language access policies and services for LEP parents of young children, therefore, are a prerequisite to promoting the equitable participation of DLL children in public ECEC programs. Similarly, LEP workers in the early

childhood field—professionals uniquely well positioned to provide linguistically responsive services to DLL families—need adequate language services in order to remain and advance in the field. Across early childhood systems and programs in the United States, however, language services remain insufficient or nonexistent. And as the DLL population becomes increasingly linguistically diverse, LEP families who speak lower incidence languages are particularly unlikely to have access to sufficient translation and interpretation services to facilitate their participation in beneficial programs.

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Many ECEC programs lack the necessary data and accountability measures to demonstrate equal access for DLL families, despite civil rights requirements to provide meaningful access to services for LEP beneficiaries. This is particularly true for the federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) and Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program and for state pre-kindergarten (pre-K) programs, all three of which do not require reporting on adequate translation, interpretation,

• *Overlooked but Essential: Language Access in Early Childhood Programs*

By Maki Park, Jacob Hofstetter, and Ivana Tú Nhi Giang
bit.ly/LangAcECEC

• *FACTSHEETS BY STATE Dual Language Learners: Key Characteristics and Considerations for Early Childhood Programs*

By Ivana Tú Nhi Giang and Maki Park
bit.ly/DLLfacts2022



Ohio's Dual Language Learners

Key Characteristics and Considerations for Early Childhood Programs

OCTOBER 2022

BY IVANA TÚ NHI GIANG AND MAKI PARK

Dual Language Learners (DLLs) are young children who have at least one parent who speaks a language other than English in the home. In Ohio, about one eighth (13 percent) of children age 5—approximately 105,000 young children—are DLLs. These children possess many important strengths, including their home language skills and cultural assets.

Extensive research has demonstrated that high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) services provide disproportionate benefits for DLLs, including in terms of their language development and future academic outcomes. However, available data also shows that DLLs enroll in such programs at lower rates than other young children. This points to a need to address barriers that may prevent DLL families from accessing these programs as well as to ensure the relevance and quality of ECEC services for this population.

This fact sheet highlights important characteristics of DLLs' families in Ohio that should be considered in ECEC program and policy design and implementation. This information is based on Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) for the 2015–19 period, pooled. This fact sheet accompanies a policy brief entitled *Overlooked but Essential: Language Access in Early Childhood Programs*, which looks at the characteristics of DLLs' families nationwide, federal and state language access policies in the early childhood field, and opportunities to improve language access to boost DLLs' participation in high-quality ECEC services.

Language barriers and efforts to overcome them are likely to play a significant role in DLL families' access to early childhood services.

- Out of the 105,000 DLL children living in Ohio in 2015–19, 42 percent had at least one Limited English Proficient (LEP) parent, meaning the parent reported speaking English less than "very well" in the ACS (either "well" or "not well" or "not at all"). Either one or both parents for approximately 4,000 of these DLLs reported speaking English "not at all."
- One fifth (20 percent) of DLLs in the state lived in linguistically isolated households, which the U.S. Census Bureau defines as households in which all members who are age 14 or older speak a non-English language and also speak English less than "very well" (that is, they are LEP).⁴



Speakers

- **Margie McHugh**
*Director, National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy (NCIIP),
Migration Policy Institute (MPI)*
- **Maki Park**
Senior Policy Analyst for Early Education and Care, NCIIP, MPI
- **Jacob Hofstetter**
Associate Policy Analyst, NCIIP, MPI
- **Ivana Tú Nhi Giang**
former Program and Research Assistant, NCIIP, MPI



Overview

- Overview of Issue
 - *Why Language Access?*
- Language Access Laws & Applications to Early Childhood
- Demographics of Dual Language Learner (DLL) Families
- Evidence of Barriers to Access
- Fact Sheets Walk-Through
- Policy Opportunities & Implications
- Q&A



Why is Language Access Important?

- Ability to enroll and participate in programs regardless of English language ability
- Limited English Proficient (LEP) families less likely to know about or be able to register for many public programs, raising equity concerns
- Program relevance & quality for these families also a concern
 - Language skills/match not always reflected in quality ratings
- An issue not only for LEP families, but also LEP providers
 - LEP child care providers face many barriers registering in system & accessing subsidies and other support
- Language access is foundational to equity, but often overlooked



The Right to Language Access

- Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* forbids discrimination on the basis of national origin in federally assisted programs.
 - This includes not providing access to services to individuals solely because they do not speak English proficiently.
- Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals have a right to meaningful access to federally assisted programs, and recipients of federal funding have an obligation to provide access to their services.
 - Includes state and local level recipients of federal funding as well as those providers receiving indirect federal funding (i.e. through vouchers).
- Executive Order 13166 extends this requirement to cover both federally conducted and federally supported activities.



Language Access Requirements For Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

- Any ECEC program that receives funding through U.S. Department for Health & Human Services (HHS) (or other federal agencies) must provide access to their services for LEP individuals, including children and adults.
 - Including Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), Head Start, and Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) programs.

- HHS has issued its own LEP Guidance for recipients of its funding.
 - Provides information and guidance on how recipients can ensure compliance with Title VI language access requirements.
 - Includes an assessment (the 4-factor analysis) to help recipients better understand the best mix of language assistance services.
 - Guidance on how to ensure effective interpretation, accurate translation, properly trained staff, and appropriate planning.



Language Access Requirements For Early Childhood Education and Care

- CCDF, Head Start, and MIECHV each have their own regulations and statutory language regarding the accommodation of LEP children and their families.
- These programs have additional requirements that carry more specific obligations for programs or state agencies receiving funding.
 - For example, CCDF regulations require states' lead agencies to report on what strategies they are using to conduct outreach to LEP families while Head Start requires the use of interpreters and translators where appropriate.
- The extent of implementation, evaluation, and accountability around language access requirements in ECEC systems is difficult to gauge across diverse programs, geographies, and providers.



DLL Household Data: National Overview

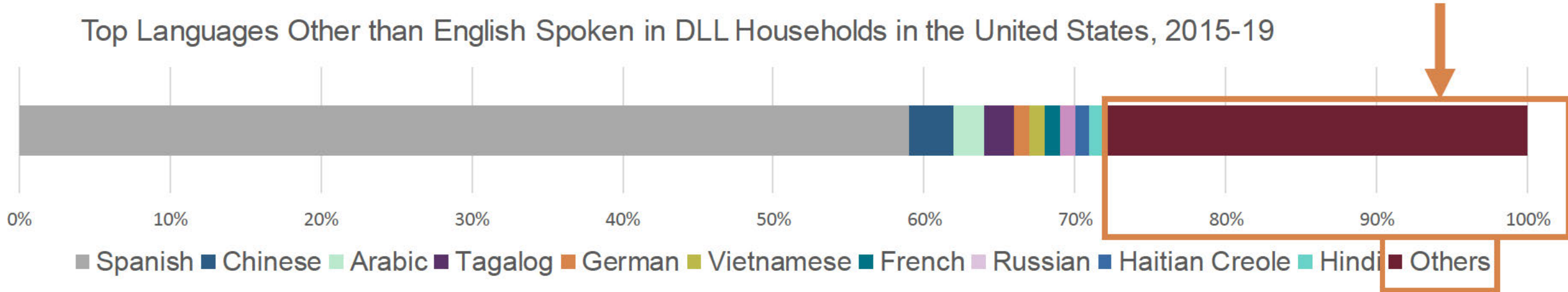
- **One-third** of all **U.S. children** ages 0 to 5 in are **DLLs**.
- Nearly **half** (44 percent) of these DLLs had **at least one LEP parent**—that is, approximately **3.3 million** children.
- Multiple, compounding factors contributing to lack of access:
 - DLLs **more than three times as likely** to have at least one parent whose highest level of educational attainment is **less than a high school diploma or equivalent** (29 percent vs. 9 percent, respectively).
 - Roughly **half** (51 percent) of DLL households were **low-income**, compared to 38 percent of non-DLL households.
 - Among DLLs in **low-income** households with **at least one LEP parent** and **at least one parent with limited formal education**, approximately **one-quarter** (26 percent) of those households had **no internet access**.
- Based on MPI's NCIIP's analysis of **2015-19 ACS data**.



Evidence & Implications: Barriers to Access

- Child Care Development Block Grant (**CCDBG**), Child Care Development Fund (**CCDF**)
 - More than 15 years of evidence—insufficient language services, data for LEP parents has meant **disproportionately lower access**.
- Maternal, Infant, & Early Childhood Home Visiting (**MIECHV**)
 - **Without more culturally and linguistically diverse home visiting staff**, immigrant-background families rendered invisible and underserved.
- **Head Start, Early Head Start**
 - Proportionately serving DLLs for years; **demonstrates potential for other programs** with same federal civil rights mandates to improve.
- **State Pre-K**
 - Only 8 states proved proportionate DLL enrollment in 2019-20—raising **need for more data in and across states** as a first step in improving access.

Evidence & Implications: Linguistic Diversity



Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015–19 ACS, pooled

- **One-quarter** (26 percent) of DLLs—roughly **1.9 million** children—in households speaking **dozens of languages other than the top 10** most common languages after English.
- **At state/local levels: even greater diversity;** less commonly spoken languages may constitute **larger shares**.
 - **More targeted** language services requires **greater funding and resources**.



DLL Household Data: State Factsheets



FACT SHEET

Massachusetts's Dual Language Learners Key Characteristics and Considerations for Early Childhood Programs

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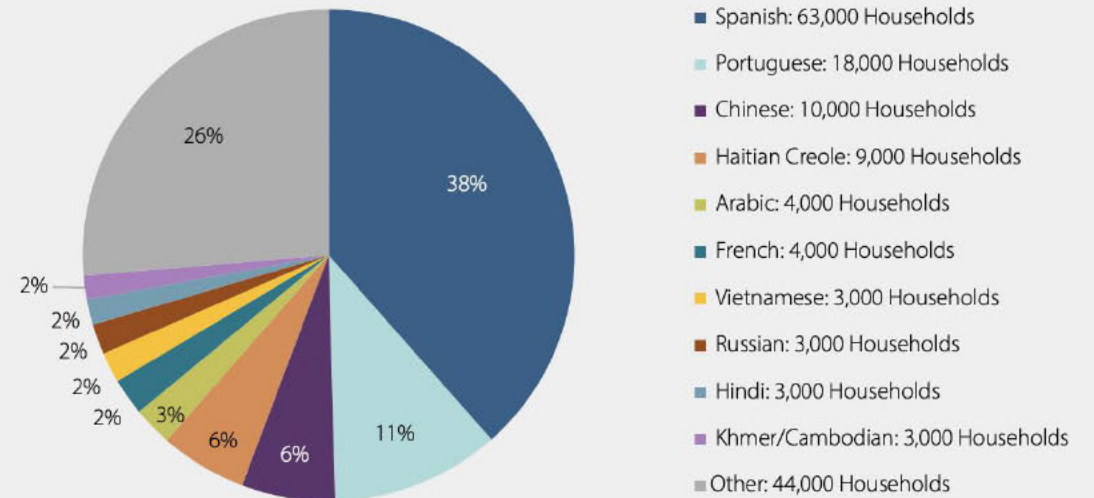
BY IVANA TÚ NHI GIANG AND MAKI PARK

Language barriers and efforts to overcome them are likely to play a significant role in DLL families' access to early childhood services.

- ▶ Out of the 164,000 DLL children living in Massachusetts in 2015–19, 42 percent had at least one Limited English Proficient (LEP) parent, meaning the parent reported speaking English less than “very well” in the ACS (either “well,” “not well,” or “not at all”). Either one or both parents for approximately 11,000 of these DLLs reported speaking English “not at all.”
- ▶ About one-fifth (22 percent) of DLLs in the state lived in linguistically isolated households, which the U.S. Census Bureau defines as households in which all members who are age 14 or older speak a non-English language and also speak English less than “very well” (that is, they are LEP).⁴

FIGURE 1

Top Non-English Languages Spoken in DLLs' Households in Massachusetts, 2015–19



Notes: Languages spoken are self-reported in the American Community Survey (ACS). Shares may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding. “Chinese” includes Mandarin, Cantonese, and other Chinese languages. “French” includes French, Patois, and Cajun. “Portuguese” includes Portuguese and Portuguese Creole.

Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2015–19 ACS, pooled.



DLL Household Data: State Factsheets

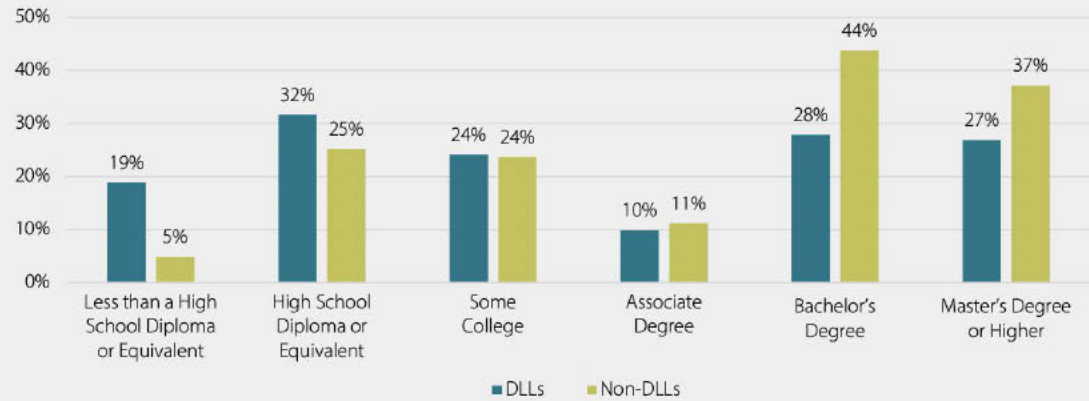
FIGURE 2
Share of Massachusetts Children Ages 0 to 5 Residing in Low-Income Households, by DLL Status, 2015–19



Source: MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015–19 ACS, pooled.

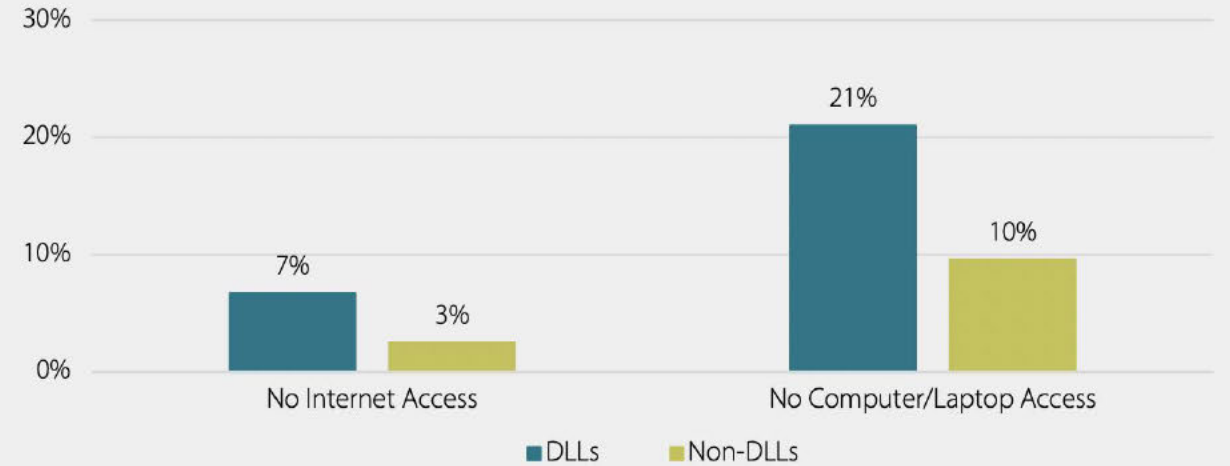
FIGURE 3
Parental Education Levels of Massachusetts Children Ages 0 to 5, by DLL Status, 2015–19

Share of children with at least one parent whose highest level of formal education is...



Source: MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015–19 ACS, pooled.

FIGURE 4
Internet and Computer/Laptop Access in the Households of Massachusetts Children Ages 0 to 5, by DLL Status, 2015–19



Source: MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015–19 ACS, pooled.



Policy Recommendations

- Include robust language access requirements in new ECEC funding streams across federal, state, and local levels
- Identify DLLs in state early childhood data systems
- Integrate language access accountability into state systems (QRIS)
- Build language access into program reporting and evaluation
- Use regional/community hubs to provide language access support
- Partner with trusted community organizations



Q & A

- Use Q&A chat function to write questions
- Or email events@migrationpolicy.org with your questions
- Or tweet questions to @MigrationPolicy #MPIdiscuss
- A recording and slides will be available at:
<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/events>



Thank You For Joining Us!

For more information:

www.migrationpolicy.org
www.migrationpolicy.org/integration

Contact us:

Margie McHugh

mmchugh@migrationpolicy.org

Maki Park

mpark@migrationpolicy.org

Jacob Hofstetter

jhofstetter@migrationpolicy.org

Reporters can contact:

Michelle Mittelstadt

Director of Communications
and Public Affairs, MPI

mmittelstadt@migrationpolicy.org

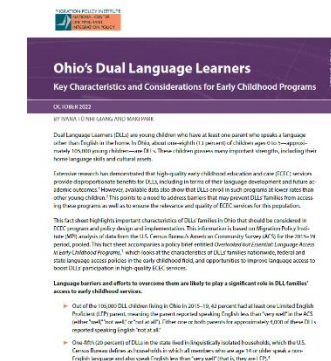
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