

New Opportunities? ESSA and Its Implications for Dual Language Learners and ECEC Workforce Development

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Executive Summary

The passage of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) in 2015—the culmination of a decade of negotiation—brought with it several important shifts in federal education policy, including increased attention to the field of early childhood education and care (ECEC). By introducing opportunities to use federal funds to strengthen the ECEC workforce, the law aimed to better meet the needs of the growing and increasingly diverse U.S. young child population.

Dual Language Learners (DLLs), children under the age of 5 who have at least one parent or guardian who speaks a language other than English at home, stand to benefit significantly from improvements in the quality and accessibility of ECEC services. By 2014, there were 7.5 million DLLs in the country, up from 4.2 million in 1990, representing 32 percent of all children under age 5. These children, many of whom are the U.S.-born children of immigrants, are not a homogeneous population; they vary in terms of linguistic background, socioeconomic status, and educational opportunities. Approximately 30 percent of families with DLL children had a family income below 100 percent of the federal poverty level in 2012–14, making DLLs more likely to live in poverty than their non-DLL peers. Lower incomes and other factors, such as parental legal status, have resulted in lower preschool enrollment rates among DLLs compared to their non-DLL counterparts, despite significant evidence of the benefits high-quality ECEC holds for such children, including in terms of kindergarten readiness and future academic achievement.

As awareness of DLLs' learning strengths and needs has grown, attention has turned to the ECEC workforce to determine whether it is equipped to serve this population. In 2013–15, 1.8 million workers were employed in the ECEC field, with immigrant and refugee workers making up almost one-fifth of this total. Despite significant growth, there is a shortage of ECEC workers—one that is predicted to worsen in the coming years. And while immigrant ECEC workers may be well equipped to meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse children and their families, they are more likely than native-born workers to hold positions that earn a lower wage. Close to half of foreign-born workers are employed in private home- or family-based child care, and many may struggle to access the training and education needed to advance their careers. As policymakers and education advocates call for stricter qualification requirements for ECEC workers, it will be important to ensure that such a move does not push foreign-born workers out of the field, depriving it of much needed linguistic skills and cultural competency.

In an attempt to address both the evolving demographics of the young child population and the new demands placed on the ECEC field, ESSA includes provisions that would allow federal K-12 funding to be used to serve children under age 5. These include a competitive state preschool grant program and the explicit inclusion of ECEC as an allowable activity in several other competitive grants.

Given these changes, there are a number of opportunities for states to more fully leverage ESSA to strengthen the ECEC workforce and better serve DLLs, including by:

- recruiting a workforce that reflects the demographic make-up of the child population;
- providing integrated training for ECEC workers that combines language and professional skills to make it accessible to workers with different educational and linguistic backgrounds, while avoiding drawing instruction out for prohibitively long periods of time;
- offering training and professional development opportunities designed to deepen principals' understanding of DLLs' learning strengths and of the challenges they face;
- extending professional development to a larger share of ECEC workers and making it an ongoing process rather than one-time event;
- making available professional development opportunities in languages other than English and/or that bring together ECEC workers and K-12 teachers to improve alignment and coordination as DLLs make their way from pre-K into elementary and secondary school; and

- involving ECEC workers in the creation of curriculum in a way that promotes the development of professional skills outside a formal training setting.

As the share of DLLs among U.S. children rises, such opportunities provide a chance to critically assess the recruitment, training, and ongoing professional development of foreign- and native-born ECEC workers alike and to adapt to the changing needs of the nation's youngest learners.

I. Introduction

After ten years of negotiation, Congress passed the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) in the waning days of 2015. President Obama signed the bill into law on December 10, calling it “a Christmas miracle”—an appropriate reference given the partisan bickering that preceded its final adoption. This reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (or ESEA, the principal vehicle of federal funding for public education) is distinguished by its transfer of decisions about accountability from the federal to the state level. It is also notable—and distinct from the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the previous reauthorization of ESEA—for its attention to the early childhood education and care (ECEC) field. Advocates in Congress and in communities across the country pushed for provisions that would better meet the needs of the youngest learners and of English Learners (ELs). As a result, the introduction of ESSA held particular promise for Dual Language Learners (DLLs)—ELs who are under the age of five and have not entered kindergarten—who sit at the intersection of these two groups.¹ The law not only opened avenues for expanded and improved instruction for DLLs, it also created vehicles for strengthening the ECEC workforce, in which immigrant workers play a prominent role.

This policy brief analyses the opportunities ESSA introduced for DLLs and the ECEC workforce. It begins by setting out key demographics of the DLL population, including its rapid growth and characteristics. The brief then discusses trends in the ECEC workforce and its capacity to meet the needs of DLLs and other children in ECEC settings. It maps the ESSA provisions intended to address these needs through support for ECEC workers. Finally, it highlights opportunities to support the recruitment, training, and ongoing development of a robust and culturally responsive workforce.

II. Who Are Dual Language Learners?

DLLs represent a large and growing portion of the child population in the United States. These young children, many of whom are the U.S.-born children of immigrants, have at least one parent or guardian who speaks a language other than English at home and, as a result, are exposed to more than one language at home and in an ECEC setting.² The profile of the DLL population presented in this section is based on Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), pooled for the period of 2012–14 to provide the most detailed estimates possible.

In the 2012–14 period, there were more than 7.5 million DLLs, representing 32 percent of all U.S. children under the age of five. Many of the states with the largest DLL populations are traditional destinations for immigrants, and in 2012–14 the top five destination states were home to 58 percent of DLLs. California had the largest population of DLLs (1,785,000), followed by Texas (1,145,000), New York (594,000), Florida (505,000), and Illinois (316,000).

Looking at the DLL share of each state's young child population, California again ranks first with DLLs representing 59 percent of children

under the age of five in the state. Texas is second (49 percent), followed by New Mexico (48 percent), New Jersey (44 percent), and Nevada (44 percent). At the other end of the spectrum, West Virginia, Mississippi, North Dakota, Maine, and Montana all have DLL populations that make up less than 10 percent of the total state young child population.

Both the absolute number of DLLs and their share of the young child population have grown over the last few decades. The number of DLLs in the United States rose from 4.2 million in 1990 to 7.5 million in 2014, an increase of 81 percent. In some states, this growth has been even more dramatic. North Carolina saw the largest increase, at 373 percent, and Nevada and Georgia also saw increases of more than 300 percent. The DLL share of all U.S. young children rose from 19 percent in 1990 to 32 percent in 2014, while also increasing in nearly every state.³

Within this growing population, a number of factors have the potential to affect DLLs' development. First, there is substantial diversity in the languages spoken at home. Among parents characterized as Limited English Proficient (LEP), 71 percent speak Spanish.⁴ The next most commonly spoken languages nationwide are Chinese (4 percent), Vietnamese (3 percent), Arabic (3 percent), and Korean (1 percent). However, there is considerable variation between states in the top languages spoken and the share of the population that speaks them. In addition to being exposed to languages others than English at home, DLL children are more likely to live in poverty than their non-DLL peers: 30 percent of families with DLL children had a family income below 100 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) in 2012–14,⁵ compared to 23 percent of those with non-DLL children. Similarly, 58 percent of families with DLL children had incomes below 200 percent of the FPL, compared to 44 percent of those with non-DLL children.

A number of parental factors are also relevant to DLLs' development. Forty-seven percent of parents of DLLs are not U.S. citizens, compared

to 1 percent of parents of non-DLL children. On average, the parents of DLLs also had lower rates of educational attainment, with 27 percent of parents of DLLs lacking a high school diploma or its equivalent, compared to 7 percent of parents of non-DLL children. In addition, 43 percent of parents of DLLs were LEP. The combination of these characteristics has the potential to affect the ability of parents to participate in their children's education, including assisting with homework and communicating with teachers.

DLL children ages 3 to 4 are enrolled in preschool at lower rates than their non-DLL peers: 41 percent compared to 48 percent. Instead, many young children from families where English is not spoken in the home (particularly those that are low income) are served by informal, home-based child-care providers who may have limited access to training opportunities.⁶ While research has shown that high-quality ECEC programs are beneficial to all children,⁷ DLLs stand to reap even greater benefits than most.

III. Profile of the ECEC Workforce

As the number of DLLs in the United States grows, new demands are placed on practitioners in early childhood education and care. The ECEC field includes programs that range from home- and center-based child care to school-based programs such as public Pre-K, and its workforce has grown significantly over the past couple of decades. Between 1990 and 2013–15, it increased from 1.1 million to 1.8 million workers.⁸ The ECEC workforce is almost entirely female: 95 percent of all workers in the field are women.⁹

The push to expand the provision of ECEC will likely lead to further increases in the demand for qualified workers. The U.S. Department of Labor predicts that between 2014 and 2024 there will be 158,700 new and replacement

jobs for preschool teachers.¹⁰ This projected growth comes on top of an existing shortage of bilingual and bicultural preschool staff—with demand for such workers likely to grow as programs that support native-language development become more widely adopted.

Just as the overall ECEC workforce has grown, so too has the number and share of immigrant workers in the field. From 1990 through 2013–15, the number of foreign-born ECEC workers increased by 241 percent (from 94,000 to 320,000), compared to an increase of 37 percent among the native born (from 1 million to 1.4 million).¹¹ The immigrant share of the ECEC workforce also rose from 8 percent to 18 percent during the same period, reaching nearly one-fifth of the workforce.¹²

While diversity does not assure cultural competence, a diverse workforce is an important resource in promoting child development and school readiness, particularly as the share of young children with diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds increases. Multilingual and multicultural ECEC educators may be better able to communicate with and understand the needs of diverse families.¹³ As of 2013–15, 41 percent of ECEC workers were Hispanic or non-White, with much of this racial diversity coming from immigrant workers: 83 percent of immigrant workers were from racial and ethnic minority groups, compared to 31 percent of native-born workers.¹⁴ However, the distribution of these workers between occupational groups varies, with immigrants more likely to be employed in family-based child care than as preschool teachers or program directors. Close to half of immigrant ECEC workers provided private home- or family-based child care in 2013–15, compared to 28 percent of native-born workers. This trend was even more pronounced among immigrant workers who were LEP; most LEP workers, the majority of whom are immigrants, were employed in family- and center-based child care (67 percent and 50 percent, respectively), while much smaller shares worked as preschool teachers (35 percent) or program directors (24 percent).¹⁵

Native-born workers were nearly twice as likely as immigrant workers to be program directors or preschool teachers.¹⁶ As a result, there is less diversity among better-paid and more highly qualified ECEC workers.¹⁷

In terms of linguistic backgrounds, approximately 22 percent of all ECEC workers spoke a language other than English.¹⁸ Spanish was the most common language after English and was spoken by 16 percent of the workforce.¹⁹ Immigrant workers provide much-needed language skills, making up 63 percent of Spanish speakers, 72 percent of French and Haitian Creole speakers, 87 percent of Chinese speakers, 86 percent of Polish speakers, 89 percent of Portuguese speakers, 91 percent of Russian speakers, and 93 percent of Tagalog speakers.²⁰ Due to the uneven distribution of immigrant and native-born workers between ECEC professions, workers with foreign-language skills were mostly employed in lower-paid positions within the field. For example, 71 percent of family-based ECEC workers spoke only English, while 23 percent spoke Spanish (either Spanish only or in addition to another language).²¹ By comparison, 87 percent of program directors and 84 percent of preschool teachers spoke only English, while around 10 percent spoke Spanish.²² Linguistic gaps also existed between the ECEC workforce and the languages that families of DLLs spoke at home: after English and Spanish, ECEC workers were most likely to speak a European language, while LEP parents with DLL children most often spoke an Asian language or Arabic.²³

On average, ECEC workers have lower levels of educational attainment than the general U.S. workforce: 61 percent of the ECEC workforce ages 25 and older had less than an associate's degree, compared to 55 percent of the overall U.S. workforce and 52 percent of all female workers in the country.²⁴ While 1 percent of the native-born ECEC workforce is LEP, 53 percent of the foreign-born ECEC workforce falls into this category.²⁵ Both the federal Head Start program and states are increasingly calling for stricter education

requirements for ECEC workers. However, obtaining the additional credentials desired—which can range from a high school diploma to an associate's or bachelor's degrees—can be both expensive and time consuming for workers. Moreover, the field provides a low return on education: the average ECEC worker sees an increase of \$7,100 for obtaining a bachelor's degree (versus an associate's degree), compared to \$36,600 for U.S. workers overall. A low premium is also placed on associate's degrees and high school diplomas. There are thus few incentives to obtain increased qualifications and a rather unclear path to advancement.²⁶

Compared to other fields, the ECEC workforce receives very low wages—approximately one-third of the U.S. average. Part-time workers (excluding program directors), who make up the majority of the ECEC workforce, made an average of \$8,900 to \$13,600 per year; part-time program directors earn around \$23,100 annually. Even full-time, year-round ECEC workers (excluding program directors) earn \$21,500 to \$26,200 a year—an income that may be just enough to bring a family of four above the FPL.²⁷ Full-time program directors earn an average of \$42,700.²⁸ Relatedly, approximately 16 percent of ECEC workers live in poverty; that is, their annual family incomes are below 100 percent of the FPL (less than \$24,250 for a family of four in 2015).²⁹ The poverty rate is even higher for immigrant ECEC workers (21 percent).³⁰ The low wages of ECEC workers are particularly concerning because they have been linked to poor program quality and represent a challenge to efforts to increase worker qualifications.³¹

While similar shares of immigrant and native-born ECEC workers hold bachelor's degrees (22 percent and 27 percent, respectively), foreign-born workers are much more likely to lack a high school diploma (25 percent compared to 5 percent).³² Fifty-three percent of the immigrant ECEC workforce is LEP, and 18 percent are both LEP and lack a high school diploma.³³ For low-educated and LEP individuals, in particular, the emphasis put

on earning academic credentials by education policymakers and advocates can create significant obstacles to career advancement. And even when immigrant workers have the same level of educational attainment as their native-born colleagues, they are less likely to be in a leadership position.³⁴

This elevation of qualifications standards has occurred alongside the need to enhance workforce skills to meet the increasing diversity of the young child population and the rising demand for ECEC workers overall. As a significant share of the ECEC workforce, immigrant workers are well placed to contribute desirable skills, such as cultural and linguistic competency. However, many face obstacles to training and advancement: in addition to lower levels of formal education and higher levels of limited English proficiency, immigrant workers are disproportionately likely to work in home- and family-based care settings and are underrepresented in both instructional and leadership positions. Taken together, these factors put immigrant ECEC workers at a disadvantage for mobility in a sector where their skills are increasingly in demand. Workforce training and other policies that target ECEC workers with less than a high school diploma and with limited English skills could help reduce these barriers.³⁵

IV. ECEC-Focused Provisions in ESSA

After much back and forth, the final version of ESSA has a significant emphasis on supporting young children. While some of the law's ECEC provisions were new, many existed in the previous version of the law, the controversial *No Child Left Behind Act*.³⁶ Efforts to create a significant new ECEC grant program did not have bipartisan support; however, a smaller grant program was eventually included as part of a bipartisan compromise. The law also created multiple openings for the use of federal K-12 funds for children between the ages of 0

and 5, and for the creation of state policies that support this population.

Perhaps the most significant breakthrough in terms of increasing resources to align pre-K with elementary education is a new preschool grant jointly administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education. The competitive state grant program was authorized at \$247.4 million in fiscal year (FY) 2017.³⁷ It seeks to promote increased access, quality, and coordination for ECEC programs serving low- and moderate-income children between ages 0 and 5. States will apply for a one-year initial grant and then reapply for a three-year renewal grant. Initial grant funds can be used to:

- conduct periodic statewide needs assessments, including of the number of children served and those awaiting services;
- develop strategic plans that promote collaboration, coordination, and program enhancements and support for children as they transition from ECEC into elementary schools;
- expand parental involvement and understanding of states' often complex systems for delivering ECEC services; and
- share best practices that improve transitions from ECEC to elementary school.

Renewal grant funds may be used for similar activities, as well as to award subgrants to programs to expand access to early learning opportunities for children from low- to moderate-income families—groups in which DLLs are disproportionately represented.

Beyond the preschool grant program, the law also includes new reporting requirements. States that plan to use ESSA Title I funds to support ECEC programs must outline how they will do so in a state plan they are required

to submit annually to the U.S. Department of Education. In addition, information about the number and share of all children served in preschool programs must be included in state report cards. Similarly, if a district intends to use Title I funds for early learning, the state plan must describe how the district will support children transitioning from ECEC to elementary school and how the district will coordinate Title I services with ECEC programs. If a district uses Title I funds for ECEC services, those services must conform to the performance standards established by the *Head Start Act*—the law that governs services provided as part of the Head Start program to more than 1 million young children.³⁸ For many districts, this requirement may be especially consequential as the Head Start performance standards published in 2016 seek to align early childhood and early elementary education and would, among other things, require programs to focus on developing the child’s home language as well as English.³⁹

Under Title II, ESSA addresses professional development and teacher preparation. In FY 2017, state grants for teacher and principal training, preparation, and hiring under Title II-A were budgeted at \$2.25 billion, with an additional \$100 million allocated for teacher and school-leader enhancement project through the Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) program.⁴⁰ Professional development funds may be used to build the capacity of early childhood professionals as well as elementary educators in a manner that begins to address some of the shortcomings that have been identified in the field. Among the topics that can be addressed through professional development are: the transition to elementary school, instruction and measurement in the early grades, developing programmatic and administrative capacity to support early education teachers, and specialized instruction for teachers of DLLs.

Literacy education—specifically the new Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) program designed to improve reading and writing from birth to grade 12—is also

included under Title II of ESSA. This program supports states in developing comprehensive literacy instruction plans, and in FY 2017, \$190 million was budgeted to Comprehensive Literacy Development Grants, the successor to the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program.⁴¹ It also provides funding for competitive subgrants to ECEC programs and to local educational agencies and their public or private partners to implement programs that provide high-quality, comprehensive literacy instruction to students most in need (as identified through a literacy needs assessment). At least 15 percent of these funds can be used for children from birth through kindergarten entry. These federal funds may be combined with local funding for professional development that supports early literacy as well as for training and coordinating with families, early education programs, principals and other school leaders, and community stakeholders.

Title III, originally the *Bilingual Education Act* under ESEA and ESSA’s primary targeted funding vehicle for EL instruction, also allows formula-based funds granted to states and districts to be used for professional development through the Title III National Professional Development Program. As before, school districts may use these funds to provide ECEC services to DLLs. However, Title III also provides competitive funds to higher education institutions to provide professional development to improve instruction for ELs and support educators working with such students. These funds allow grantees to implement strategies that promote the school readiness of DLLs and their transition from ECEC programs to elementary school. Appropriations under Title III have been essentially flat at roughly \$737 million from FY 2009 through FY 2016, however, FY 2017 saw an increase, bringing funding up to slightly more than \$800 million to help meet the needs of this fast-growing population.⁴²

A variety of programs fall under Title IV that could be used to support ECEC, including charter schools and the Ready to Learn Program. In the 2013–14 school year, 5.1 percent of all public-school students (or 2.5 million

students) were enrolled in charter schools nationwide.⁴³ More elementary-school-aged children were enrolled in charter schools than secondary-school-aged children in 2014,⁴⁴ and the Charter School Program can be used to support charter schools that serve young children through auxiliary ECEC services. The Ready to Learn Program provides competitive grants for developing, producing, and distributing educational and instructional video programming for preschool and elementary school children. The program also promotes the use and availability of materials in federally funded programs such as Head Start to assist parents, caregivers, and teachers in their roles in early childhood development.

Title VI provides support for the education of Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native students, many of whom are DLLs. The Native American Program can be used to support ECEC programs that support the development of the language and culture of young Native Americans. The Improvement of Educational Opportunities for Indian Children and Youth Program supports ECEC programs that help young children achieve academic growth targets by the end of third grade, including kindergarten, prekindergarten, and family-based preschool that focus on school readiness. The Alaska Native Program also supports early childhood and parenting activities designed to improve school readiness. Additionally, Title VI funds support family engagement and professional development for teachers of children from these groups.

Although ESSA did not require states to create new ECEC systems, it did provide them with an avenue to better integrate ECEC programs into state education plans. Expanding state flexibility to spend federal funding on ECEC-related services and resources was intended to bolster a commitment at the state level to ECEC and DLLs.

V. Opportunities to Support DLLs by Strengthening the ECEC Workforce

While ESSA is essentially a K-12 law, because it incorporates elements of ECEC, this legislation offers states an opportunity to think more holistically about educating children with a range of linguistic backgrounds and learning needs. Data-informed planning and a comprehensive strategy that charts a path from early childhood through to high school are essential to creating systemic changes that will benefit DLLs. Thorough preservice educator training and ongoing in-service professional development are two key components that will support such change.

Such a comprehensive approach is most effective when driven by data on the demographics, needs, and skills of the state's children and workforce. Conducting a needs assessment that constructs a state- and district-level profile of DLLs is essential if a framework is to be aligned with state and local needs. Such an assessment should include information on the demographics, academic progress, and completion rates of EL and non-EL students; school resources and environments; and educator skills and performance. This data can facilitate the identification of linguistic and other competencies that should be present in the ECEC workforce in order to effectively serve DLLs. As changes do not take place in a vacuum, states will need to first identify what resources are currently in place in the K-12 and ECEC spheres and make adjustments accordingly.

Opportunities available under ESSA to improve pre-service educator training include:

- ***Recruiting and maintaining a diverse workforce that reflects the children and families served.*** Starting with a comprehensive needs assessment,

ESSA funding (from Title II as well as from other parts of the law, including Title III) can be used to support ECEC workers' participation in formal teacher training through universities. Expanded enrollment and education is particularly important given the rising qualifications standards in the ECEC field—a trend that poses a particular challenge to ECEC programs that need a diverse workforce to serve DLLs.

- ***Supporting grow-your-own initiatives that hire and promote the career development of individuals within DLLs' communities.*** Doing so will contribute to the development of a workforce that is responsive to the needs of a diverse child population. For example, in Hennepin County, MN parents of children enrolled in a Head Start program run by Parents In Community Action, Inc. (PICA) can participate in its Parent Professional Development Internship Program to receive training, feedback, and support while working to obtain their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. PICA then works to hire parent alumni of the program as part of a strategy to recruit a workforce that reflects the backgrounds of the children in its program.
- ***Using integrated training pathways to boost the skills and qualifications of ECEC workers with different educational and linguistic backgrounds.*** Programs that offer a mix of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, basic education, and skills training as well as standard early childhood development training can strengthen the ECEC workforce, given the low education and limited English proficiency of many of its workers. Because immigrant ECEC workers are less likely to have a high school diploma or to be fully English proficient than their native-born peers, integrated programs provide an opportunity to certify in

the field more rapidly than if they were to proceed sequentially through ESL and Adult Basic Education courses before enrolling in a degree program. For example, Miami Dade College in Florida has piloted a bilingual pathway from the high school through bachelor's degree levels for those interested in working in the ECEC field. As a part of this program, several courses are offered in languages other than English and students often take one ECEC course and one ESL course each semester. This coupling enables students who have not yet attained English proficiency to begin professional coursework while strengthening their language skills.

- ***Offering training to help elementary school principals understand DLLs' experiences in ECEC.*** A better understanding of DLLs' backgrounds will help school leaders shape a suitable approach, curriculum, and assessment process, thus easing DLLs' transition into the K-12 environment. Providing administrators with this type of training would also promote coordination between ECEC and K-12 programs and systems and support a school culture that welcomes DLLs and their families.

Opportunities to support ECEC workers' in-service professional development under ESSA include:

- ***Making professional development in a range of DLL-related topics available to all ECEC workers.*** These topics may include bilingualism, language instruction and curriculum, assessment, and the noncognitive educational needs of DLLs. For ECEC workers who already possess strong linguistic and cultural competencies but lack training in other areas, professional development opportunities could support understanding of child development and related instructional skills. Alter-

nately, for workers who have already undergone training in child development, opportunities to strengthen linguistic and cultural competencies are important if the entire ECEC workforce is to be responsive to the needs of the increasingly diverse young child population.

- **Ensuring development opportunities are evidence based, relevant, and part of a continuous process.** As ESSA stipulates, professional development should be “sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short-term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused.”⁴⁵
- **As with educator training, providing professional development opportunities in languages other than English.** For example, the Urban College of Boston has partnered with the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center to offer home child-care providers the opportunity to begin coursework toward a certificate or associate’s degree in Early Childhood Education in Mandarin (with other instruction later to be provided in English). By supporting the development of LEP workers, such initiatives promote the development of an ECEC workforce with diverse linguistic skills and cultural competencies.
- **Offering professional development opportunities that bring together ECEC and K-12 educators and administrators.** Joint programs increase common understanding and coordination, and help ensure continuity and alignment as DLLs make their way across the pre-K to high school continuum. Increased coordination between the ECEC and K-12 environments in state planning, data reporting, and sharing of best practices would also increase alignment in educator training and reduce instructional gaps.

- **Involve ECEC workers in curriculum development activities.** Doing so will indirectly promote professional development outside of formal training settings and encourage workers to apply new skills and concepts.
- **Offering Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) outreach and training opportunities.** These state oversight systems help organize ECEC programs and services and provide parents with valuable information on the quality of services offered by different ECEC providers.⁴⁶ While more widely used in larger preschool settings, state and district administrators can take steps to ensure that such opportunities are also accessible to home- and family-based providers, many of whom are immigrants, who may otherwise be isolated from the system. This could promote the alignment of standards and consistency of quality across a wider range of programs.

VI. Conclusion

New and unprecedented levels of diversity among the U.S. young child population call for an ECEC workforce that is responsive to a wider range of linguistic, cultural, and educational needs. As the number of DLLs in pre-K programs rises, policymakers and program administrators will need to find a way to support the initial recruitment, training, and ongoing development of foreign- and native-born workers alike. ESSA—with its intense focus on ECEC and the transition into K-12—provides an important opportunity to step back and critically assess how to best to strengthen the workforce and address the changing needs of the nation’s youngest learners.

Endnotes

- 1 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, *Policy Statement on Supporting The Development of Children Who Are Dual Language Learners in Early Childhood Programs* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, 2016), www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/dll_policy_statement_final.pdf.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of the 1990 and 2000 U.S. decennial census and of pooled 2012–14 data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS).
- 4 English proficiency is self-reported in the ACS, with respondents asked to indicate whether they speak English “very well,” “not well,” or “not at all.” In accordance with U.S. Census Bureau definitions, individuals who report speaking English less than “very well” are considered Limited English Proficient (LEP). Spanish includes Spanish Creole.
- 5 The federal poverty level (FPL) is calculated based on a family’s income and the number of people who reside in that family. As of 2014, the FPL was \$23,850 for a family of four. See U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “HHS Poverty Guidelines,” updated August 31, 2017, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/prior-hhs-poverty-guidelines-and-federal-register-references>.
- 6 Ajay Chaudry, Juan Pedroza, Heather Sandstrom, Anna Danziger, Michel Grosz, Molly M. Scott, and Sarah Ting, *Child Care Choices of Low-Income Working Families* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2011), www.urban.org/research/publication/child-care-choices-low-income-working-families/view/full-report.
- 7 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, *High-Quality Early Learning Settings Depend on a High-Quality Workforce: Low Compensation Undermines Quality* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, 2016), www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/files/ece-low-compensation-undermines-quality-report-2016.pdf.
- 8 MPI analysis of pooled 2013–15 ACS data.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 MPI analysis of data from U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Employment Projections,” accessed March 23, 2016, <http://data.bls.gov/projections/occupationProj>. Preschool teachers include the job titles: early childhood teacher, head start teacher, nursery school teacher, nursery teacher, pre-K teacher, prekindergarten teacher, and preschool teacher. This group does not include child-care administrators, child-care center directors, head start directors, prekindergarten program coordinators, or preschool directors. Actual demand may thus be higher if upper management positions are considered.
- 11 MPI analysis of pooled 2013–15 ACS data.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), *Responding to Linguistic and Cultural Diversity: Recommendations for Effective Early Childhood Education* (Washington, DC: NAEYC, 1995), www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSDIV98.PDF.
- 14 MPI analysis of pooled 2013–15 ACS data.
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