THE LANGUAGE OF THE CLASSROOM

Dual Language Learners in Head Start, Public Pre-K, and Private Preschool Programs

By Megina Baker and Mariela Páez

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Executive Summary

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs across the United States are experiencing an increasing level of linguistic and cultural diversity among the children they serve. Dual Language Learners (DLLs)—young children who grow up speaking more than one language at home and in the classroom—bring to these classrooms unique learning strengths, experiences, and challenges. And while considerable research has explored effective teaching practices for DLLs in bilingual classroom settings, far less is known about what works in superdiverse contexts, where the children in a class speak a wider variety of languages.

This report examines teaching practices that can successfully support the learning and development of DLLs in linguistically diverse ECEC programs. It draws on interviews with educators and program directors; focus group discussions and surveys with families; classroom observations; and the collection of classroom artifacts from six preschool classrooms. The classrooms chosen were nominated by their local communities for providing exemplary and high-quality early learning opportunities for DLLs, and include three program types: Head Start, public pre-kindergarten (pre-K), and private preschools. Teacher and program language use across these different contexts was investigated to deepen understanding of effective practices and to identify examples of exemplary teaching.

Teachers made intentional decisions about their language use in the classrooms and were guided by asset-oriented beliefs about linguistic and cultural diversity.

A review of classroom quality using the Early Literacy and Language Classroom Observation Pre-K (ELLCO Pre-K) showed that all six were similar in their use of exemplary practices, though the precise instructional practices chosen differed based on the level of linguistic diversity in the classroom and languages individual teachers were able to speak. All early childhood educators in this study drew upon their knowledge of the children and families involved in their programs to make their teaching and curriculum more responsive to young DLLs. To do this, teachers made intentional decisions about their language use in the classrooms and were guided by asset-oriented beliefs about linguistic and cultural diversity. Although the public pre-K classrooms in this study were more linguistically homogeneous than either the private preschool or Head Start classrooms (with most children speaking Spanish and English), their teachers did not see the children as a homogeneous group; rather, they were attentive to the varied cultural backgrounds and ethnic origins of each family, and made efforts to learn about each culture to better support their children.

The educators in these classrooms made strategic decisions about how and when to use their students' home languages, often depending on the program's policy context, the classroom's linguistic composition, and teachers' language skills and knowledge of the backgrounds of the children and families. For example, home languages were incorporated into morning messages and greeting routines so that children experienced hearing a wide range of languages, including the home languages of the classroom community. In addition, teachers who spoke the home languages of children in the classroom used these languages during play and classroom activities. In some cases where children and teachers did not share the same language, teachers recruited family members or other program staff to speak their home languages in the classroom, especially with children who were newcomers to the program.

Based on these observations and findings, the report offers recommendations for policies at different levels—from that of individual teachers and classrooms, to local, state, and national policies—that can improve how ECEC program support DLLs. These include:

- designing training and professional development opportunities to equip teachers with the tools to get to know diverse children and their families, and strategies for supporting home languages;

- developing school and classroom structures that allow educators to learn about children and their families and apply that knowledge in designing curriculum and classrooms practices that support both English and home-language development and that use community members as resources for linguistic and cultural activities;

- establishing processes and structures to collect detailed information regarding families' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, to conduct appropriate assessments, and to engage families and communities in the education of their children; and

- instituting national and state policies that explicitly supports the inclusion of home languages in ECEC settings to promote the success for young DLL children.

Given the similarities identified across these programs, and with more U.S. early learning programs grappling with how to support linguistically and culturally diverse children, creating opportunities for ECEC practitioners to learn from one another also promises to improve understanding of effective ways to serve DLLs in superdiverse classroom contexts.

I.   Introduction

Across the United States, early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs are experiencing an increase in the enrollment of Dual Language Learners (DLLs), young children who speak a language other than English at home.[1] In 2015, DLLs composed 29 percent of Head Start enrollment nationally, with 25 percent of all children enrolled coming from Spanish-speaking families.[2] This follows national demographic trends: nearly one in four children in the United States is Latino/Hispanic, and more than one in three comes from a home where a language other than English is spoken.[3] According to national indicators, the percentage of children who speak a language other than English at home has more than doubled in the past three decades,[4] intensifying the need for educators, researchers, and policymakers to provide effective programs that promote DLLs' school readiness. However, most of the research on educational practices that effectively support DLLs has focused on the K-12 population; little research centers on the early childhood learning context.[5]

This report addresses this gap in the literature by investigating teaching practices that support language learning and development among young DLLs in linguistically "superdiverse" early childhood programs—

1   Dina C. Castro, Eugene E. Garcia, and Amy M. Markos, *Dual Language Learners: Research Informing Policy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, Center for Early Care and Education—Dual Language Learners, 2013), http://cecerdll.fpg.unc.edu/sites/cecerdll.fpg.unc.edu/files/imce/documents/%232961_ ResearchInformPolicyPaper.pdf.
2   U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, "Head Start Program Facts Fiscal Year 2015" (fact sheet, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC, 2016), http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/data/factsheets/2015-hs-program-factsheet.html.
3   Child Trends, *Dual Language Learners: Indicators of Child and Youth Well-being* (Washington, DC: Child Trends, 2014), www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/127_Dual_Language_Learners.pdf.
4   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" (statement, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development, Washington, DC, 2016), www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/ dll_policy_statement_final.pdf.
5   Ibid. "Early childhood" is defined here as the years between birth and age five.

programs in which multiple home languages and cultures are represented in the classroom population. It examines teachers' use of language across different contexts to highlight effective practices and provide examples of exemplary teaching in diverse classrooms.

A.   The Importance of High-Quality Early Learning Programs for DLLs

Research demonstrates that preschool programs can have significant positive impacts on children's early learning.[6] In particular, preschool classrooms that provide high-quality experiences based on developmentally appropriate curricula and that foster supportive interactions between teachers and children have been found to be very effective in improving children's social, language, reading, and mathematics skills.[7] Although access to and participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs is uneven across different populations, research shows that DLLs can especially benefit from these programs by learning language, early literacy, and math skills that contribute to their school readiness.[8] This is particularly true for children who experience multiple risk factors, such as low English proficiency and poverty.[9] (The convergence of these two particular factors is a significant sociodemographic reality for many DLLs; more than two-thirds of these children live in or near poverty.[10]) Thus, high-quality ECEC services present an opportunity for DLLs to learn valuable skills and make important developmental gains as they start school.

> *DLLs can especially benefit from these programs by learning language, early literacy, and math skills that contribute to their school readiness.*

Early childhood scholars have argued that definitions of what constitutes high-quality early education need to be inclusive of DLLs.[11] While the features of ECEC programs that have been identified as providing quality classroom experiences are critical for all children, DLLs have specific cultural, linguistic, and educational needs, and their development must be understood within social, cultural, and historical contexts.[12] Research over the last decade has provided increasing evidence that DLL children demonstrate particular developmental pathways for cognitive, language, and social-emotional skills,[13] which need

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6   Hirokazu Yoshikawa et al., *Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education* (Chapel Hill, NC: Society for Research in Child Development, Foundation for Child Development, 2013), www.fcd-us.org/assets/2016/04/Evidence-Base-on-Preschool-Education-FINAL.pdf.

7   Ibid.

8   Virginia Buysse et al., "Effects of Early Education Programs and Practices on the Development and Learning of Dual Language Learners: A Review of the Literature," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (2013): 765–85, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2013.08.004.

9   Stephanie Schmit et al., "Investing in Young Children: A Fact Sheet on Early Care and Education Participation, Access, and Quality" (fact sheet, National Center for Children in Poverty, New York, NY; and Center for Law and Social Policy, Washington, DC, 2013), www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_1085.pdf.

10   Danielle Crosby and Julia Mendez, *Hispanic Children's Participation in Early Care and Education: Type of Care by Household Nativity Status, Race/Ethnicity, and Child Age* (Washington, DC: National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families, 2016), www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2016-58HispECEHoursAmtTiming1.pdf.

11   Dina C. Castro, Linda Espinosa, and Mariela Páez, "Defining and Measuring Quality in Early Childhood Practices that Promote Dual Language Learners' Development and Learning," in *Quality Measurement in Early Childhood Settings*, eds. Martha Zaslow, Ivelisse Martinez-Beck, Kathryn Tout, and Tamara Halle (Washington, DC: Paul H. Brookes, 2011), 257–80.

12   Castro, Garcia, and Markos, *Dual Language Learners*.

13   Allyssa McCabe et al., "Multilingual Children: Beyond Myths and Towards Best Practices," *Social Policy Report* 27, no. 4 (2013): 3–21, www.srcd.org/sites/default/files/documents/E-News/spr_27_4.pdf; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2017), www.nap.edu/catalog/24677/promoting-the-educational-success-of-children-and-youth-learning-english; Mariela M. Páez, Patton O. Tabors, and Lisa M. López, "Dual Language and Literacy Development of Spanish-Speaking Preschool Children," *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 28, no. 2 (2007): 85–102.

to be considered in early childhood education, research, and policy. For example, program directors and teachers need to account for DLLs' specific developmental characteristics—such as their exposure to different languages, multilingual skills, social-emotional skills, cognitive flexibility, and executive function—when designing and examining the quality of educational environments. In addition, ECEC programs need to consider contextual factors that might pose challenges for this population, such as poverty, family background, and access to schooling and ECEC programs. Scholars point to several key features of high-quality curriculum and instructional practices that can be used to support this population: a focus on language development and oral language skills, including vocabulary; support of first-language skills in addition to the acquisition of English; and the importance of establishing reciprocal relationships with families, even when faced with the challenges associated with cultural and linguistic diversity.[14]

Substantial research demonstrates the benefits of early childhood programs that foster the development of young DLLs' home languages.[15] Recent studies have found that DLL preschoolers who receive more instruction in their home language within high-quality early learning programs can make significant gains compared to DLLs who receive less home-language support.[16] For example, a study of 357 Spanish-speaking four-year-olds in preschool classrooms across 11 states found that DLLs' gains in reading and math were larger when they received more instruction in Spanish in high-quality classrooms with responsive and trained teachers than when they received little to no instruction in Spanish.[17] Other significant benefits of supporting DLLs' home-language development during early childhood include promoting bilingualism, establishing a strong cultural identity, and maintaining strong ties and the ability to communicate well with family members.[18] Yet, support for home languages in early learning settings varies widely and is influenced by program types and policies. A few studies have identified specific ways in which early childhood teachers can use home languages in the classroom to communicate academic content, support classroom management, and connect with children. However, this limited research has focused on bilingual Spanish/English classrooms rather than multilingual contexts.[19]

B.   *Preschool Program Types*

Young children in the United States participate in a variety of early childhood programs, some of them subsidized by federal or local governments, and others, private programs that charge tuition to families.[20] Some of the most commonly available programs include Head Start, public pre-kindergarten (pre-K) provided within local school systems, and private preschool. According to the 2016 edition of the *State of Preschool* report put out by the National Institute for Early Education Research, 8 percent of four-year-olds are enrolled in Head Start programs, and 32 percent in state-funded public preschool programs, with an additional 3 percent in federally funded special education programs.[21] Unfortunately, nationwide data on enrollment in private programs are not readily available, due to the wide variety of program types, structures, and monitoring characteristics of such programs.

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14   Castro, Espinosa, and Páez, "Defining and Measuring Quality."
15   Buysse et al., "Effects of Early Education Programs and Practices"; McCabe et al., "Multilingual Children"; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Promoting the Educational Success*; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, "Policy Statement on Supporting the Development of Children."
16   U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, "Policy Statement on Supporting the Development of Children."
17   Margaret Burchinal et al., "Instruction in Spanish in Pre-Kindergarten Classrooms and Child Outcomes for English Language Learners," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (2012): 188–97.
18   Linda M. Espinosa, *Early Education for Dual Language Learners: Promoting School Readiness and Early School Success* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2013), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/early-education-dual-language-learners-promoting-school-readiness-and-early-school-success.
19   Mileidis Gort and Ryan W. Pontier, "Exploring Bilingual Pedagogies in Dual Language Preschool Classrooms," *Language and Education* 27, no. 3 (2013): 223–45; Luciana C. De Oliveira, Alsu Gilmetdinova, and Carolina Pelaez-Morales, "The Use of Spanish by a Monolingual Kindergarten Teacher to Support English Language Learners," *Language and Education* 30, no. 1 (2016): 22–42.
20   W. Steven Barnett et al., *The State of Preschool 2016: State Preschool Yearbook* (New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2017), http://nieer.org/state-preschool-yearbooks/yearbook2016.
21   Ibid.

Each preschool program type has unique programmatic and policy structures, staff qualification requirements, and curricular and instructional philosophies and goals. In addition, the policies and guidelines focused on the DLL population vary across programs and program types. Structures and goals are for the most part centralized and clearly articulated for Head Start programs,[22] as they operate under a common nationwide framework.[23] Head Start is a federally funded ECEC program that serves low-income families by providing educational and comprehensive health services to more than 1 million children, 29 percent of whom are DLLs.[24] In the state of Massachusetts, where this study took place, Head Start served approximately 10,900 children in 2015, 43 percent of whom were DLLs.[25]

In contrast to the uniformity of Head Start, public pre-K programs, by nature of their affiliation with the decentralized public education system of the United States, vary according to the state and local district policies that govern them. This study focuses on the early childhood program of the Boston Public Schools (BPS), where an increasing number of four-year-old children are served in pre-K classrooms. According to data reported in 2015, among the 2,400 preschoolers enrolled across the 80 schools of BPS (36 currently accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, or NAEYC), approximately 46 percent were DLL children.[26]

Private preschool programs are perhaps the most difficult to characterize, given that most policy and curricular decisions are made at the level of the school or childcare center.[27] It is precisely this degree of independence and self-governance that sets private programs apart from other models of preschool programs and influences their unique approaches to teaching DLLs.

C.   Policy Landscape: DLLs in Early Childhood Programs

Multiple policies, program standards, and guidelines exist that can potentially benefit DLLs in early childhood settings. In particular, policy initiatives at the federal, state, and local levels can impact the curriculum and instructional practices used to assess and promote language use among DLL children in the classroom.

At the national level, regulations from the Office of Head Start and its Program Performance Standards include specific recommendations for improving services for DLL children.[28] As noted by education scholar Keith McNamara, the fact that the Head Start regulations "explicitly recognize bilingualism

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22   U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, *The Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework: Promoting Positive Outcomes in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children 3–5 Years Old* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

23   Note that Head Start published a new set of guidelines during the course of the study—the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework—in 2015. However, we refer to the position statements and documents from 2010 since these were available to the program staff and administrators at the time of the study. While the old framework presented a separate section on English language acquisition for Dual Language Learners (DLLs), the new framework integrates information about DLLs throughout all domains of development. Both frameworks assert the importance of supporting home language and clearly state that children who are DLLs should be "allowed to demonstrate . . . skills, behaviors, and knowledge in their home language, English or both languages." Ibid., 4.

24   U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, "Head Start Program Facts"; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, *Report to Congress on Dual Language Learners in Head Start and Early Head Start Programs* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013), www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/report_to_congress.pdf.

25   National Head Start Association, "2016 Massachusetts Head Start Profile" (fact sheet, National Head Start Association, Alexandria, VA, 2016), www.nhsa.org/files/resources/fact_sheet_massachusetts.pdf.

26   Boston Public Schools, "Early Childhood Education," accessed December 15, 2017, www.bostonpublicschools.org/earlychildhood.

27   Though there is great diversity among these programs, they are subject to licensure regulations such as minimum requirements for child-teacher ratios, facilities, and teacher education. For example, in the state of Massachusetts, private preschool programs must follow the licensing requirements described by Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, *Standards for the Licensure or Approval of Family Child Care; Small Group and School Age and Large Group and School Age Child Care Programs* (Boston: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2010), www.mass.gov/edu/docs/eec/licensing/regulations/2010-reg-family-group-school-age-child-care-programs.pdf.

28   U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, *The Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework*.

as a strength, require culturally and linguistically appropriate screening and assessment tools, and urge programs to engage with families and communities" reflects the leadership of this organization in developing guidance and policy to support the early learning of DLL children.[29] Though these recommendations apply only to Head Start programs, they have the potential to influence state and other local policymakers given their national visibility. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education presented a joint policy statement in 2016 urging that federal, state, and local policies be specifically designed for young children who are DLLs, taking into account the benefits of bilingualism and the strengths and challenges observed within this population.[30]

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)—the largest professional association for early childhood educators in the United States—also offers important guidelines and position statements. It promotes a constructivist approach to teaching and learning known as developmentally appropriate practices,[31] which encourage a whole-child approach to learning and development, learning through play and hands-on exploration, and the establishment of a caring community of learning that includes families. The framework explicitly mentions the importance of language and culturally appropriate practices and presents specific recommendations for assessing DLLs (e.g., gathering information about their first language and making sure that assessments are valid and culturally appropriate), but it has also been critiqued for lacking specifics regarding classroom practices that focus on DLLs and the diversity of this population.[32]

There are also general educational policies, such as the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015* (ESSA), whose priorities drive state policymaking for public schools. ESSA focuses considerable attention on English language proficiency and the academic achievement of DLLs as part of school and district accountability. These policies promulgated at the federal level can also have an impact on early childhood programs by encouraging them to align with the increasingly rigorous K-12 curriculum standards and accountability measures.

ESSA focuses considerable attention on English language proficiency and the academic achievement of DLLs as part of school and district accountability.

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care has published policies and guidelines[33] for promoting best practices for DLL children that focus on helping young DLLs with language and literacy development and engaging and establishing relationships with their parents. The department developed these policies in partnership with the Head Start State Collaboration Office to support best practices for children from birth to age eight and their families in early education programs throughout the state's mixed delivery system (i.e., family child care, center- and school-based programs including Head Start, public and private programs). In addition, these guidelines identify competencies for program quality and early childhood educators working with DLL children, including policy, curricula, assessment, and professional development recommendations.

29 Keith McNamara, "Dual Language Learners in Head Start: The Promises and Pitfalls of New Reforms," *Migration Information Source,* September 8, 2016, www.migrationpolicy.org/article/dual-language-learners-head-start-promises-and-pitfalls-new-reforms.

30 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, "Policy Statement on Supporting the Development of Children."

31 Carol Copple and Sue Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8,* 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009).

32 Nancy File, Jennifer J. Mueller, and Debora Basler Wisneski, eds., *Curriculum in Early Childhood Education: Re-Examined, Rediscovered, Renewed* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Megina Baker, "Exemplary Practices for Teaching Young Dual Language Learners: Learning from Early Childhood Teachers" (PhD dissertation, Boston College, 2017).

33 Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, *Early Education and Care Policies and Guidelines for Children Whose Home Languages Are Other Than or in Addition to English* (Boston: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2010), www.mass.gov/edu/docs/eec/laws-regulations-and-policies/20101203-dual-lang-edu-policies.pdf.

In addition to these policies and guidelines, local-level decisions include choosing among classroom instruction models that vary in the type of support they provide for home languages.[34] Such models include dual-immersion or two-way programs in which instruction occurs in two languages; bilingual models that offer instruction in English with varying levels of support for home languages; Sheltered English Immersion (SEI), which is focused on English as the primary language of instruction; and English-only or English-immersion models that provide little or no support for home languages. Although mostly applicable to K-12 classrooms, these models have been adapted to some early childhood settings, especially with the expansion of public pre-K and its alignment with the K-12 system. It is therefore important to consider not only the policies that impact curriculum and language-use practices, but the instruction models that specify the language of instruction in DLLs' classrooms and schools.

In the state of Massachusetts, SEI has been the legally mandated program for DLLs since 2002, when Massachusetts law Chapter 71A required that all public school children be taught all subjects in English with a minimal amount of home-language support when necessary.[35] In the years since, the state has developed regulations requiring all teacher candidates and in-service teachers to obtain an SEI endorsement through the Restoring Equity to English Language Learners (RETELL) initiative in order to be considered qualified to teach DLLs.[36] These policies have resulted in a strict limitation on bilingual programs in K-12 classrooms in public schools, and have been under attack by educators and advocates of bilingual education, some of whom seek to overturn the policy. To date, there has been no investigation of how these policies impact early childhood settings and, in particular, public pre-K classrooms.

> *These policies have resulted in a strict limitation on bilingual*
> *programs in K-12 classrooms in public schools.*

D.   Study Goals and Research Questions

In sum, research has identified some promising practices for teaching DLLs.[37] DLLs who participate in dual-language classroom settings demonstrate the highest level of long-term benefits, while other kinds of bilingual models offer more benefits than do English-only programs.[38] However, less is known about effective practices related to language use in classrooms where a wider variety of languages are

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34 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, "Policy Statement on Supporting the Development of Children."

35 Commonwealth of Massachusetts, "General Laws of Massachusetts—Chapter 71a: English Language Education in Public Schools," accessed December 15, 2017, https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71A. It is important to note that some dual-immersion schools and programs do exist in Massachusetts; these have received exemptions from the law, and families may opt into them.

36 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, "Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners (RETELL)," updated February 20, 2018, www.doe.mass.edu/retell/; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Guidance on Identification, Assessment, Placement, and Reclassification of English Learners* (Malden, MA: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2017). The Restoring Equity to English Language Learners (RETELL) initiative aims at transforming the teaching and learning of English Learners through a new system of curriculum standards; assessment, endorsement, and licensure requirements; and professional development. See Janet M. Smith, Celine Coggins, and Jorge M. Cardoso, "Best Practices for English Language Learners in Massachusetts: Five Years after the Question 2 Mandate," *Equity and Excellence in Education* 41, no. 3 (2008): 293–310.

37 Castro, Espinosa, and Páez, "Defining and Measuring Quality"; Espinosa, *Early Education for Dual Language Learners*; Patton O. Tabors, *One Child, Two Languages: A Guide for Early Childhood Educators of Children Learning English as a Second Language,* 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Pub. Co, 2008).

38 Kathryn Lindholm-Leary and Fred Genesee, "Student Outcomes in One-Way, Two-Way, and Indigenous Language Immersion Education," *Journal of Immersion and Content-Based Language Education* 2, no. 2 (2014): 165–80; Ilana Umansky and Sean F. Reardon, "Reclassification Patterns among Latino English Learner Students in Bilingual, Dual Immersion, and English Immersion Classrooms," *American Educational Research Journal* 51, no. 5 (2014): 1–34.

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spoken[39] and how these practices might vary across different types of preschool programs. To address this gap, the present study investigates language use patterns across three types of programs—Head Start, public pre-K, and private preschool—with a focus on superdiverse classrooms in which multiple home languages are represented. The research described here is part of a larger qualitative study of instructional practices in exemplary classrooms that provide DLL children high-quality early learning opportunities, including in non-superdiverse settings.[40] The findings presented in this report focus on the following research questions:

1. What are the instructional and language-use practices employed by exemplary teachers to support DLL children in superdiverse settings?

2. What are the similarities and differences in these practices across different types of early childhood programs?

II. Methods

The present study was conducted between 2015 and 2016 in Boston, Massachusetts, where more than 35 percent of residents speak a language other than English at home and more than 140 languages are spoken across the city.[41] This qualitative case study[42] is of six preschool classrooms nominated as exemplary for young DLLs during a series of interviews and focus group discussions with local program directors, teachers, and families. The authors asked study participants to describe an ideal classroom (and an ideal teacher) for a DLL child, and asked for nominations of classrooms in the community that met these criteria.[43] The sample included two Head Start classrooms, two public pre-K classrooms, and two classrooms in preschools affiliated with private universities. Each of the six classrooms was located in a different school.

A. Classroom and Participants

The Head Start classrooms observed for this study were run by one of the largest Head Start grantees in the Boston area, which operates more than 30 early childhood centers.[44] The public pre-K classrooms were in the BPS early childhood program, which serves an increasing number of four-year-old children. As mentioned above, of the 2,400 preschoolers BPS enrolled (across 80 schools) in 2015, approximately 46 percent were DLL children.[45] The two programs associated with private universities[46] served a total of 64 preschool children, of whom 33 percent were DLLs from various linguistic backgrounds.

39 McNamara, "Dual Language Learners in Head Start."
40 Baker, "Exemplary Practices for Teaching Young Dual Language Learners."
41 Mark Melnik and Alvaro Lima, *New Bostonians 2012* (Boston: Mayor's Office of New Bostonians, 2012), www.bostonplans. org/getattachment/1651e206-4e95-487e-9935-712fda6e0335.
42 Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* 4th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2009).
43 For more information on the community nomination process and participant-generated criteria of excellent teaching for young DLLs, please see Baker, "Exemplary Practices for Teaching Young Dual Language Learners."
44 Action for Boston Community Development, "Head Start and Early Childhood Education Programs in Greater Boston," updated September 29, 2017, https://bostonabcd.org/2017/09/29/head-start-early-childhood-education-programs-greater-boston/.
45 Boston Public Schools, "Early Childhood Education."
46 James Elicker and Nancy Barbour, "Introduction to the Special Issue on University Laboratory Preschools in the 21st Century," *Early Education and Development* 23, no. 2 (2012): 139–42; Thelma Harms and Rebecca Tracy, "Linking Research to Best Practices: University Laboratory Schools in Early Childhood Education," *Young Children* 61, no. 4 (2006): 89–93.

The demographics of the children in the six classrooms studied reflected local neighborhood populations,[47] with a highly diverse linguistic community in both the Head Start and private preschool classrooms. The public pre-K classrooms were more linguistically homogenous, with Spanish being the primary language spoken by DLL families in both classrooms. Although they are not superdiverse, this study included these classrooms because they allow for a comparative exploration of exemplary teaching practices in a public early childhood context. In all six classrooms, as teachers explained during study interviews, some students arrived at preschool with proficiency in both their home language and English, while others were new to English.

Participants in the study included early childhood directors, principals, teachers, family members, and children associated with the six classrooms. Teachers were especially important participants, as they are uniquely positioned to cultivate authentic knowledge of practice[48] not only for application to their own classroom but as contributors to the wider field of teaching and teacher education. For example, teachers in this study were asked to reflect on their teaching practices with DLLs while also participating in the data analysis through video debrief sessions on these practices. Table 1 provides an overview of study participants, as well as the languages spoken in the classrooms they were affiliated with. All languages mentioned were actively used by the children's immediate families at the time of the study.

Table 1. Study Participants and Language Use, by Program Type

	Head Start	Private Preschool	Public Pre-K	Total
Participants				
Directors	9	2	6	17
Teachers	4	6	4	14
Family members	27	8	15	50
Children	36	33	42	111
Language Use				
Languages spoken (* denotes languages spoken by teachers)	Albanian* Amharic Arabic* English* Haitian Creole Portuguese Spanish Somali	Chinese (Mandarin) English* Hebrew Japanese Kannada Korean Malayalam Marathi Norwegian Portuguese Spanish*	Spanish* English*	
Share of children who were DLLs	95%	33%	100%	--

B.   Data Sources

The data sources for this in-depth qualitative exploration of the six exemplary classrooms included:

- nine semi-structured interviews with directors;
- twelve semi-structured interviews with teachers;

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47   Specific neighborhoods are not named here to protect study participants' confidentiality. Information about Boston's neighborhood demographics can be found at Statistical Atlas, "Overview of Boston, Massachusetts (City)," accessed December 15, 2017, https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Massachusetts/Boston/Overview.
48   Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan L. Lytle, "Relationships of Knowledge and Practice: Teacher Learning in Communities," *Review of Research in Education* 24, no. 1 (1999): 249–305.

- coffee hours, focus group discussions, and surveys with DLL family members;

- twenty-four classroom observations (including one video observation per classroom); and

- classroom artifacts and children's work samples from each classroom.

During interviews, educators described their teaching practices while working with DLL children (including how they used English and other languages) and provided examples of curriculum, classroom routines, and practices for engaging with DLL families. Classroom observations, which took place over a period of four months, included structured observations to document teaching practices for DLL children. In particular, verbal interactions between teachers and DLL children were documented using running records of conversation (i.e., an observer wrote down everything a child said and did during a specified length of time or during a designated activity),[49] detailed field notes, and video recordings. In addition, the classroom curriculum, physical setup and provisioning of materials, and structural aspects of the school day were noted in field notes and through a collection of classroom artifacts. Coffee hours, focus group discussions, and surveys with families provided an additional perspective, in which parents of DLL children commented on their observations of classroom practices, and communication with teachers. Meanwhile, classroom artifacts, including photographs of the classroom environment, examples of children's work, and curricular and program documents, were collected.

According to the Early Literacy and Language Classroom Observation Pre-K (ELLCO Pre-K),[50] a tool that assesses the quality of instructional practices for young children in center-based classrooms, the six classrooms were similar in their use of exemplary practices. The ELLCO Pre-K consists of 19 items organized in different sections denoting important elements of the early childhood classroom such as classroom structure, curriculum, language environment, books and book reading, and early writing. It is scored into two main subscales: 1) the general classroom environment scale describes the organization and contents of the classroom, and 2) the language and literacy scale provides information about the language and literacy experiences in a given classroom. In general, the higher the ELLCO score in these subscales, the higher the quality of the classroom environment. As Table 2 illustrates, all of the classrooms in this study scored close to the maximum for each subscale (maximum of 35 for the general classroom environment and 60 for language and literacy, making a total score of 95). A full list of the ELLCO items and subscale scores are included in the Appendix.

Table 2. ELLCO Scores of Participating Classrooms

	Private Preschool 1	Private Preschool 2	Head Start 1	Head Start 2	Public Preschool 1	Public Preschool 2
General classroom environment subscale total	35	35	33	32	35	34
Language and literacy subscale total	57	58	57	59	59	58
ELLCO total score	92	93	90	91	94	92

C.   *Data Analysis and Limitations*

Both authors of this study identify as bilingual, are former early childhood educators, and had prior knowledge of several of the classrooms studied here. To interpret the data, the authors used a thematic

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49   Oralee McAfee and Deborah Leong, *Assessing and Guiding Young Children's Development and Learning,* 6th ed. (Boston: Pearson Education, 2016).

50   Miriam W. Smith, Joanne P. Brady, and Louisa Anastasopoulos. *The Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Toolkit (ELLCO)* (Baltimore: Brookes Publishing Company, 2008).

qualitative analysis approach,[51] coded all data sources iteratively, and involved teacher participants in the analysis of the video recordings. While coding, the authors looked specifically at interactions between teachers and DLL children, considering the languages of the participants and the teaching practices used. They also consulted with teachers from each of the classrooms in the study, taking their perspectives and feedback into account when preparing the findings for publication.[52]

Due to the small scale and specific context of the study, the generalizability of its findings is somewhat limited. A study of programs outside Boston, or outside Massachusetts, could yield different results. In addition, the classrooms in this study were nominated as exemplary by their communities, and the teacher participants were a highly trained and experienced group of ECEC practitioners; the results of this study many differ from those of studies of more novice educators.

III.   Findings

Based on the authors' evaluation using the ELLCO Pre-K and observations, all classrooms in this study excelled in their use of developmentally appropriate practices[53] such as strong sense of community, flexible and engaging curriculum, child-centered teaching, authentic assessments, and partnerships with families. In this section, findings related to program policies, teacher background and language skills, and home languages of children are described, followed by specific examples of language-use patterns, which differed by program type. Particular attention is paid to interactions within superdiverse classrooms, especially where teachers and children did not share a home language.

A.   Head Start

Explicit federal Head Start policy in place at the time of this study stipulated that educators encourage the use of children's home languages, allowing for the language of instruction to be decided based on staff skills and children's languages.[54] The Head Start frameworks assert that teachers should allow children to use their home language in the classroom and to show what they know in any language, while scaffolding (i.e., supporting) their development of English. A focus on children's language and culture is evident to families right from the beginning of their participation in this program, as they answer questions during the intake process. Head Start policy requires teachers to conduct developmental screenings of children and home visits to all families. Directors described drawing on their staff resources to ensure that families could use their home languages during the visits. One director explained:

> So, if we're going to a Spanish-speaking family and my teacher only speaks English, they'll take a family advocate with them or another teacher that speaks Spanish. I have teachers now that speak Arabic, Albanian, Farsi, Spanish, German . . . I have two teachers who can speak French. So I have translators on site. So we'll kind of move them around. You know, a teacher's going off to a home visit and the parent just came here from Sudan and they speak Arabic; I will send my other teacher from a different room with her so that the teacher's still doing the home visit, she asks the questions, it gets translated.

51 Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101; Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2006); Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2009).

52 Corrine Glesne, *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction,* 4th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2010).

53 Copple and Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice.*

54 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, *The Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework*.

Several Head Start teachers and directors also described using the Ages and Stages[55] screening tool and ensuring that a staff member who spoke the family's home language attended each visit in order to be able to conduct the screening in English or the child's home language, as appropriate. Meanwhile other Head Start assessments, primarily the Teaching Strategies GOLD[56] development and learning assessment, were conducted throughout the year in English and focused on tracking English language development. In the two Head Start classrooms, most classroom interactions were conducted in English, though teachers also spoke and sometimes used written materials in several of the children's home languages.

All of the Head Start teachers communicated a belief that bilingualism should be seen as an asset.

All of the teachers and assistant teachers in the Head Start classrooms were bilingual or multilingual, and all had been recruited into teaching from the community. They reported developing an interest in teaching after their experiences as parents of children enrolled in the Head Start program many years before. Both the teachers and assistant teachers were familiar with some of the home languages and cultures of the children in their classrooms, although the number of children who shared the same home language as their teachers was small in both classrooms.[57] All of the Head Start teachers communicated a belief that bilingualism should be seen as an asset. For example, one teacher, an Albanian speaker and former Head Start parent, explained why she felt incorporating home languages and cultures into classroom life is valuable as a way to communicate respect for children and families:

> *When I started as a parent, I felt like I was welcome over here. I was respected, so I try to do this with the children. Try to make them feel like they have a sense of belonging. You know, when you put their flag out they feel like they belong there. When you put their language up, they feel respected, accepted . . . So we use the home language to meet their needs. To appreciate their culture and their language. To show them there are different languages spoken, to expose them to different languages.*

The children in these two classrooms spoke a wide range of languages, with approximately eight different languages spoken in each (see Table 1). As teachers strove to incorporate these languages into classroom life and instruction, opportunities for language support and language use differed depending on whether the teachers spoke the same language as the children.

1. When Teachers and Children Share a Home Language

When the teachers shared a language background with the children, they used the home language throughout the day in a transitional approach, gradually adding more and more English into their interactions over time based on their careful observations of the child's linguistic development. As one Arabic-speaking teacher explained:

> *Every year I have two or three children in my classroom . . . who speak Arabic. From the beginning I like to make them very comfortable to speak Arabic. Then you see those students—they speak Arabic, but they understand English at the same time.*

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55 Jane Squires and Diane Bricker, *Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3),* 3rd ed. (Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing Co., 2009). This screening tool is designed to elicit parent input regarding their child's development for the purpose of identifying developmental and social-emotional concerns.

56 Kai-lee Berke et al., *Teaching Strategies GOLD* (Bethesda, MD: Teaching Strategies, Inc., 2011).

57 Teachers shared home languages with five children in one of the Head Start classrooms, and with two children in the other Head Start classroom.

An assistant teacher added:

> *It was Arabic only in the beginning. It was mostly Arabic and now it's like half and half, some Arabic and some English. Because they understand more English now. They are naming pictures on the board. They learn single words, trying to put two words together.*

Classroom observations confirmed this flexible use of shared languages and strategic language use to scaffold learning in the classroom. For example, in a one-on-one interaction in the classroom's block play area, one teacher was observed using both Albanian and English vocabulary to label the blocks, ramps, and other materials a child was using to construct a structure. Another teacher incorporated her native Arabic into an English writing activity when an Arabic-speaking child needed to use a letter chart to write a particular English word. The teacher switched to Arabic in this exchange, supported him in locating the English letters on the chart, and discussed the message that he wanted to write in Arabic. The teacher then switched back to English to support another child in the same small group.

Parents reported their appreciation that teachers could speak their home language and these languages (e.g., Arabic and Spanish) were included in the classroom, particularly because their children could be understood at school. As one parent explained, "[the teacher] helped them very much. She speaks Arabic too."

2. When Teachers and Children Do Not a Share a Home Language

Where teachers were not fluent in all languages spoken by the children in their diverse classrooms—a common situation, particularly in superdiverse settings—bilingual instruction (e.g., switching from one language to the other as a scaffolding strategy) was not a feasible approach for supporting all DLL children. Instead, teachers relied on an extended network within the Head Start community to support the home languages of children in the classroom. Head Start directors encouraged teachers to draw on resources—such as other teachers, center staff (e.g., family liaisons, social workers), and family members—to offer home-language support to all children and families in the program. The following are some specific practices that were used in these multilingual contexts:

- *Using staff as a resource.* Teachers invited colleagues who speak the family's home language to join them for home visits in order to conduct screenings in the child's home language and to act as a translator for teacher-family conversations.

- *Asking the family to contribute resources in their home language.* These included classroom materials (books, posters, alphabet charts) and lists of common words in their language. As one Head Start teacher explained, "When I go to the home visit, I ask the parents to write the basic words for me in their language."

- *Labeling classroom areas and materials in both English and Spanish.* As Spanish was the most common home language in most classroom communities, populating the classroom with bilingual labels allowed children to see multiple languages used throughout the classroom environment, and to reference and recognize words in both Spanish and English as they played in different areas of the classroom.

- *Incorporating home languages into classroom rituals and routines.* For example, children were invited to suggest languages in which to sing a song and repeat greetings at the start of a morning meeting.

- *Inviting families into the classroom.* In both Head Start programs in the study, family members regularly volunteered in the classrooms and were encouraged to use their home languages to support their children and others who spoke that language. During one classroom observation, for example, a Spanish-speaking mother read a book aloud in Spanish to the class with her son seated in her lap, turning the pages. The teacher explained that the story would be in Spanish, and several children mentioned speaking Spanish at home. She then sat to the side, offering translation in

English to children who were unfamiliar with Spanish. Children, regardless of whether they were Spanish speakers or not, listened to the story, were engaged in the experience, and focused their attention on the book. Family members also volunteered to support family-style meals and snack times, incorporating their home languages as they passed fruit, poured milk, and supported children in cleaning up.

- ■ *Viewing children as experts.* Teachers were at times observed seeking out children in the classroom to offer their home-language expertise. For example, when a teacher was looking at an alphabet chart with Spanish-speaking Amalia, the child looked puzzled when looking at an illustration of an umbrella to represent the letter U. The Arabic-speaking teacher asked another Spanish-speaking child for advice clarify the concept:

    Teacher*: Amalia, how do you say "umbrella" in Spanish?*

    Amalia*: I don't know.*

    Teacher*: Hmm . . . José, how do you say this word (points to picture of umbrella) in Spanish?*

    José*: Sombrilla.*

As these examples illustrate, although English was the dominant language used in the Head Start classrooms, the teachers were resourceful in tapping into the linguistic wealth of the community, including that of children in the classroom, thus enabling the home languages of all the children to be embedded into the life of the classroom over time. Further, parents valued the inclusion of language as reflected in these practices, even when their child was being exposed to languages that they did not use at home. For example, an English-speaking parent explained the importance of language exposure and connected it to culture by saying, "the fact that [my daughter] doesn't speak Spanish and they're learning a whole song in Spanish is a recognition of culture, sensitive to the children's needs." Additionally, almost all Head Start parents discussed the inclusion of languages in the classroom and curriculum as a positive aspect of the program. As expressed by a parent, including different languages in the classroom is important to show "respect for culture, for who you are, recognized by the whole group; in that sense I think it's positive for the group and for the community in general."

B.   *Private Preschool*

Both the private preschool classrooms (and the programs they were part of) used English as the dominant classroom language, providing some targeted support for DLL children's home languages as needed. Private programs are free to choose their approach to language use, as long as they follow the state guidelines for high-quality and developmentally appropriate practices. In these classrooms, the teachers, who followed a co-teaching model,[58] were predominantly monolingual speakers of English trained in working with DLL children. One of the teachers was a Spanish/English bilingual. The majority of the children were also monolingual English speakers; approximately 30 percent of the children in each classroom were DLLs, and these children brought broad linguistic diversity to the community, speaking more than ten different languages across the two classrooms. As preschools accredited by the state of Massachusetts, and in one case by the NAEYC, these programs were informed by voluntary guidelines related to teaching DLL children.[59] When asked if the programs had specific policies regarding DLL children, the program directors spoke at length about their processes for welcoming new families to the

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58   The co-teaching model involves two equally qualified teachers who share all teaching responsibilities in the classroom, such as planning, instructional delivery, and assessment of student learning.

59   Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Guidance on Identification*; NAEYC, *Where We Stand on Assessing Young English Language Learners* (Washington, DC: NAEYC, 2009).

schools, which included gathering information about their home language and language proficiency. For example, one director explained:

> When I do the intake interview I ask, "What is your family's native language?" and they tell me, and I ask, "Do you need any transcription or any translation?" . . . And then I ask about the child. So then we have an idea about the child's language acquisition and how many languages they are speaking. Then in the developmental history we have a little graph that says what languages are spoken at home and who speaks it. What does the mother speak, what does the father, and anyone else in the home.

The directors also explained that these programs relied largely on observation-based assessments to track child learning and development. To comply with NAEYC certification requirements, one of the programs also used the Teaching Strategies GOLD[60] assessment in addition to observations and portfolios. All of these assessments were conducted primarily in English, tracking English language development.

Although teachers infrequently spoke the same home languages as the children in these classrooms, they described valuing bilingualism as an asset and encouraged children and families to share their languages with the school community. For example, one teacher said:

> Something that happens sometimes in our classroom is a child who speaks another language will tell somebody else how to say something in the language that they speak. The child who speaks Armenian, over time, has more and more been telling us about the language that she speaks and how to count and how to sing songs. So I think that they [DLL children] should feel comfortable with everybody knowing that they speak another language and that they should really want to share their home language and their home culture with the rest of the group.

This valuing of bilingualism led to the specific use of strategies that ensured home languages were used regularly, in small ways, in these classrooms. These practices included multiple examples of teachers incorporating children's home languages to facilitate learning through the curriculum, as described below.

Although teachers infrequently spoke the same home languages as the children in these classrooms, they ... encouraged children and families to share their languages with the school community.

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1. Targeted Hiring of Teaching Assistants to Facilitate Newcomers' Transition into the Classroom

In one of the private programs, staff pay special attention when a new child is learning English for the first time, reaching out to local university students to find a volunteer or paid assistant who can provide cultural and home-language support for children having difficulty transitioning to a new school and new language. The director recalled a particular child who benefitted from this practice:

> A Mandarin-speaking child was not adjusting and was very upset to come to school. I put out an ad immediately for Mandarin-speaking students [from the local university] and I had someone here four mornings a week when the child arrived who could speak her language. And that just made a huge difference in her whole assimilation to the group.

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60 Berke et al., *Teaching Strategies GOLD*.

2.   Morning Messages in Children's Home Languages

In another classroom, as children arrive at school each day, they read a morning message with a family member or teacher and use emergent writing (e.g., drawing, scribble writing, making mock letters) to respond to the message. Teachers rotate the language used to write the greeting as a way to incorporate all the home languages of the classroom community. One morning the message read, "Zao shang hao! ["good morning" in Mandarin Chinese] Have you seen the new puzzles in the meeting area?" Another day it read, "Shalom! [a standard Hebrew greeting] How did you get to school today?" Teachers explained that the way these messages combine another language with English served their curricular goals of cultivating an understanding that there are many languages in the world and that they look and sound different from each other, and fostering a sense of belonging among DLLs in the class.

3.   Greeting Routines in Multiple Languages

As part of the daily curriculum, teachers incorporated exposure to different languages in strategic ways. A teacher explained, "I think incorporating languages into your daily routine like we do . . . helps everybody to understand the fact that there are many different ways to communicate." The following greeting routine was observed during a morning circle time with the whole class as a way of incorporating the children's home languages into the group discourse:

> Linus, a DLL child in the group, is co-leading the greeting routine with his teacher Marina. Linus has just chosen a card from the "language bag" that says "Marathi" on the front in large print.
>
> **Marina:** *Linus chose the language called Marathi. Linus, would you like to count to 3 or 4? (Linus holds up 4 fingers) OK. I'm going to look at the back [of the card] because there is some information about how to count in Marathi.*
>
> Marina models counting in Marathi—"ek, don, teen, char"—then counts together with Linus. Linus holds up fingers to lead group. Marina leads the group in singing, "Oh, here we are together, good morning to you." Linus passes the talking stick and each child greets each other in turn, while holding the stick.
>
> **Marina:** *Let's hear what language Jacob uses to greet Yana!*
>
> **Jacob:** *Bonjour.*
>
> **Marina:** *Oh, Jacob chose French!*
>
> **Yana:** *Barev!*
>
> **Marina:** *Oh, Yana chose to say good morning in Armenian. She said "barev."*
>
> **Marina:** *Let's hear what Arel says.*
>
> **Arel:** *Hola, Paola!*
>
> **Paola:** *Hola!*

In this example, the children chose whether to use their own home languages or other languages spoken in the community, and although only a few words were spoken in any given language, an awareness of the classroom's collective linguistic knowledge was being fostered. Other examples of incorporating home languages into academic life included asking families to audio-record themselves counting in their home languages, then playing these recordings back for children, and writing "happy birthday" in multiple languages on birthday banners put up to celebrate children's birthdays.

4.   Targeted Support during Story Time

One teacher would read a story to the entire class, while another teacher sat beside one or two DLL children in the group, who held duplicate copies of the same book. This second teacher provided targeted one-on-one support to engage these children in the story, aiding English language development and comprehension. For example, during a story about animals in the forest, the second teacher translated key words from the story into Spanish for a Spanish-speaking child and gestured, pantomimed, and pointed at pictures in the book while repeating key words and phrases. DLLs who spoke other languages were also supported through the strategies described above, with the exception of translation, which the teachers were not equipped to provide.

Parents in the private programs discussed how they appreciated the inclusion of different languages and cultures in the classroom routines and program activities. As one parent explained:

> [One of] the great things here, during the morning meeting time, and . . . when they just come, there is always this emphasis on different languages, greeting in different languages and counting in different languages, which kind of sends the message to the kids that it's great to be able to know more than one language instead of focusing on purely English.

For parents from diverse backgrounds, this was even more important. Talking about her child, one parent explained, "My concern was because she was very much Armenian, I was concerned that she would be like kind of left out because she's different. That difference is embraced here." Several parents shared that the program excelled at "embracing differences," "presenting differences in a positive way," and using languages as a "window into another culture" (all quotes from private preschool parents during focus group discussions). Thus, the efforts of these programs to include language and culture were clearly noticed and valued by children's families.

C.   Public Pre-K

The two public pre-K classrooms were both designated Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) classrooms. As described earlier, in the SEI approach, English is used exclusively in the classroom, with the home language used only to provide essential clarification. All assessments, including the W-APT,[61] which is used for initial language screening, are conducted in English, with the purpose of tracking English language development over time. When school principals and teachers in this study spoke about the state policies related to the use of the SEI approach, they interpreted the policies to apply primarily to K-12 classrooms since they do not mention education at the preschool level. For example, one of the BPS directors explained, "It gets kind of muddy. [SEI in] K1 [preschool] is not by law . . . So in K1 we do [have SEI], as you know. But we don't have to. We just do." Thus, teachers and directors expressed an understanding that they did not have to adhere strictly to an English-only policy in their pre-K classrooms, and could therefore welcome children's home languages into classroom interactions. Furthermore, both teachers and directors expressed that they valued bilingualism. For example, a teacher explained:

> I always try to impress upon [DLLs] from the very beginning . . . how awesome that is that they have these two languages, how special they are that they can do that because some people can't do that. And that's an amazing thing that they can talk to all these different people. So, that is a special thing for them.

The public pre-K classrooms in this study were not as linguistically diverse as those in Head Start or the private settings. Children in these two classrooms were all exposed to Spanish at home, and all teachers

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61   WIDA, "WIDA ACCESS Placement Test for ELLs," accessed July 15, 2017, www.wida.us/assessment/W-APT/.

and assistant teachers were fluent in English and Spanish. In fact, principals at both schools explicitly sought pre-K teachers who spoke Spanish. One explained:

> [A] priority for me is hiring teachers who speak Spanish . . . Because a lot of our parents speak Spanish . . . so I'm trying to ensure that we can communicate and it's also supportive to children in that if you need to clarify what you're teaching, you can go back and forth.

Given the classroom composition and linguistic background of the teachers, staff in these classrooms used both English and Spanish throughout the day. In both classrooms, teachers spoke English almost exclusively in their interactions with children, using Spanish for occasional clarification, but used Spanish in most interactions with family members. In contrast, the assistant teachers in both classrooms spoke Spanish most of the time. Observations showed assistant teachers speaking Spanish to scaffold children's play in learning centers, when leading classroom routines (such as morning meetings), and for classroom management. For example, in one observed morning meeting, the assistant teacher gathered the group using Spanish, and continued to speak Spanish as she facilitated the morning greeting song and referenced a visual schedule to talk about the planned events for the day. Children, in turn, used both languages freely in their interactions with one another.

Given the classroom composition and linguistic background of the teachers, staff in these classrooms used both English and Spanish.

Both Spanish- and English-language interactions were observed during play situations, with children choosing the language they preferred in a given situation without correction or influence from the teachers. As one teacher explained, "We don't have to encourage them [to speak Spanish]. They just do." Spanish was also integrated into storytelling and acting[62] activities, in which children dictated invented stories and later acted them out together with classmates. If a child chose to tell a story in Spanish, this was welcomed, and the teachers also used Spanish occasionally to translate words from children's English-language stories to support comprehension and vocabulary development. Teachers reported making nuanced and intentional decisions, based on their prior observations and knowledge of children, about which language to use in a given situation. As one teacher explained:

> If I'm teaching English and my particular intent at that moment was to teach English then I'm probably going to use English. But if we're trying to help two kids figure out a problem, and if the comfort is higher in Spanish, then we might use Spanish. So really, just knowing what your goal is at that moment—and sometimes Spanish may be better suited for that goal, or sometimes English might be.

Finally, despite the fact that these public pre-K classrooms were more linguistically homogeneous than the private or Head Start classrooms in this study, teachers did not see the children as a homogeneous group. Rather, they were attentive to the cultural backgrounds and origins of each family, and made efforts to learn about each culture in order to support the children. As one teacher describing the makeup of her class during an interview said, "There are 16 children. Mostly they are of Dominican background. Some are Dominican and Puerto Rican, some are Dominican and Salvadoran, some are Salvadoran, but the primary background is Dominican, which is different . . . Dominican and Puerto Rican are quite different, culturally, from Central American families and children," indicating her understanding of the cultural richness and variation in dialects within the Latino community.

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62 For more information on classroom storytelling and acting practices used in Boston Public Schools and inspired by the work of Vivian Gussin Paley, see Boston Public Schools, "Storytelling & Story Acting," accessed February 15, 2017, https://sites. google.com/bostonpublicschools.org/earlychildhood/storytelling-story-acting.

Parents in the public pre-K classrooms explained their preference for bilingual programs. As one parent noted, "Bilingüe porque así los niños pueden desenvolverse y desarrollarse mejor y tener una mejor comunicación con su familia" ("Bilingual, because then children can better interact and develop and have better communication with our family"). Further, parents described that they wanted a bilingual program, not only to promote the maintenance of the home language (so as to maintain family communications and connections to their home country), but also for instrumental reasons (since bilingualism offers an advantage in future education and job opportunities).

IV.   Discussion

All early childhood educators in this study drew upon their knowledge of individual children and families to make their teaching and curriculum more responsive to young DLLs. Teachers made intentional decisions about their use of language in the classroom, guided by asset-oriented beliefs about linguistic and cultural diversity. Home languages were used in different ways and with different levels of intensity, depending on the program's policy context, the level of linguistic diversity in the classroom, teachers' language skills, and teachers' knowledge of the children and families in their community. The dynamics of language use varied across program types, with similarities and differences observed in how educators supported DLL children.

A.   Similarities across Programs

A number of similarities are apparent in the findings across program types, as discussed below.

1.   The Influence of Policies for DLLs

National and state-level policy contexts influence the education of all students, and DLLs in particular if specific guidelines and/or standards target this population.[63] The Head Start and private and public pre-K programs in this study had different policies, procedures, and practices for DLL children and their families. All programs collected information about families, including about their home languages and cultural backgrounds, as part of the intake process. Guided by national and state policies, all programs conducted assessments in English and focused on tracking the development of children in this language. In addition, all programs paid attention to linguistic and cultural backgrounds and competence when hiring staff and when communicating and establishing relationships with children's families. The families in all three program types acknowledged the importance of including different languages and cultures in the classrooms, since it exposed children to diversity and affirmed the inclusion of diverse families.

The language use patterns in the public pre-K classes were influenced by the SEI program model (in that English was emphasized for instructional purposes), but teachers' interpretations of the SEI approach (that included scaffolding and instruction in Spanish) could differ from the state definition.[64] Given that no prior study has investigated how the SEI influences early learning settings, this initial finding merits further research.

2.   Belief in Multilingualism as an Asset

Directors and teachers across program types expressed beliefs that bilingualism, multilingualism, and cultural diversity are assets that should be celebrated and valued within the classroom. As seen in the study findings, these beliefs served as a foundation for an array of practices that were supportive of home

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63   Ester de Jong, "Contextualizing Policy Appropriation: Teachers' Perspectives, Local Responses, and English-Only Ballot Initiatives," *The Urban Review* 40, no. 4 (2008): 350–70.

64   Commonwealth of Massachusetts, "General Laws of Massachusetts—Chapter 71a."

languages in linguistically diverse classrooms. Given that recommendations for teachers to incorporate home languages were general in the case of Head Start, not mandatory for private programs, and limited in the public pre-K programs, educators' asset-oriented beliefs were critical in motivating them to develop meaningful and intentional practices for honoring and using home languages in each classroom.

3.   Home Languages throughout the Curriculum

In the classrooms studied, and across all program types, teachers used a play-based approach. Importantly for DLLs, language was a focus throughout the curriculum. Following developmentally appropriate practices,[65] each classroom environment was organized into learning centers, including areas for dramatic play, block play, sensory play, and use of art and literacy materials, providing many opportunities for meaningful, contextualized conversations grounded in tangible materials and activities. Children moved through these centers freely as they explored materials and interacted with their peers and teachers. As shown in the findings, teachers carefully considered the developmental and learning benefits of home-language integration, and made thoughtful decisions about when and how to incorporate these languages as part of the classroom curriculum. These findings echo prior research demonstrating the benefits of high-quality developmentally appropriate curricula and strong adult-child classroom interactions for supporting young children's learning and development.[66]

Teachers carefully considered the ... benefits of home-language integration, and made thoughtful decisions about when and how to incorporate these languages.

Prior research on Spanish/English bilingual classrooms has identified a variety of ways in which teachers incorporate home languages.[67] The present study adds to this research by exploring the integration of home languages in superdiverse classrooms. As demonstrated in the findings, the exemplary teachers in this study were highly intentional about how and when they integrated home languages in their classrooms to foster social-emotional development as well as language and cognitive development. Table 3 presents examples of these different strategies connected to teaching goals.

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65   Copple and Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice.*
66   Yoshikawa et al., *Investing in Our Future*; Castro, Espinosa, and Páez, "Defining and Measuring Quality."
67   Gort and Pontier, "Exploring Bilingual Pedagogies"; de Oliveira, Gilmetdinova, and Pelaez-Morales, "The Use of Spanish by a Monolingual Kindergarten Teacher."

Table 3. Home Language Use in Exemplary Preschool Classrooms

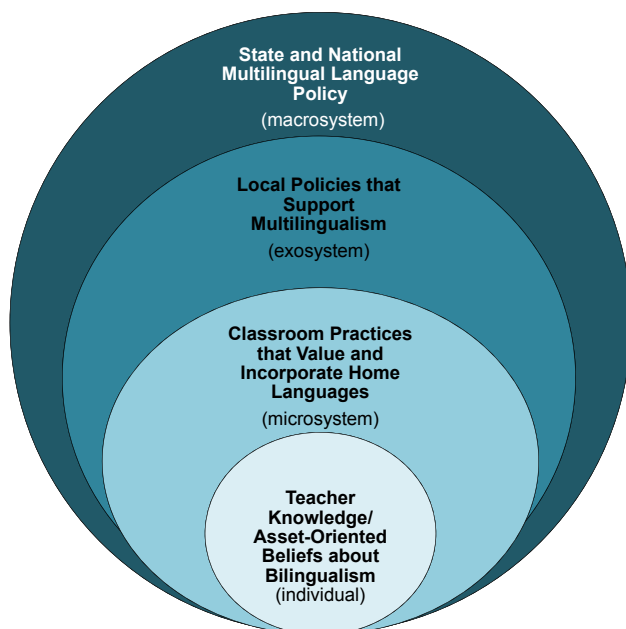| Home Language Uses	Teaching Goals	Examples from Study
Building relationships through language and culture	To cultivate a sense of belonging among DLL children, build and maintain relationships, and foster social-emotional well-being (e.g., with terms of endearment)	When a new DLL child joins the school, the director seeks out a volunteer who speaks the child's home language to support their transition and sense of belonging at school. (Private preschool)
Classroom management	To manage behavior, state expectations	At the morning meeting, a teacher uses Arabic to remind a native Arabic speaker to sit down on his spot. (Head Start)
Environment and routines	To cultivate metalinguistic awareness (e.g., appreciate that there are many languages in the world, which look and sound different from one another)	Daily written morning messages include the word "hello" in different languages used by members of the group. (Private preschool) Classroom centers are labeled with signs in both Spanish and English, and classroom materials include books and posters in Arabic, Albanian, and Spanish. (Head Start)
Curriculum, instruction, and assessment	To develop language (e.g., teaching vocabulary, foster oral language skills) To teach concepts and skills (e.g., science or math concepts) To assess learning To cultivate cultural and linguistic competence and awareness	During a small-group writing activity, a teacher invites children to use their home languages with one another to make vocabulary connections across languages. (Head Start) In a whole-group science activity with a Spanish-dominant group, a teacher uses both Spanish and English words to introduce concepts related to seeds and growing. (Public Pre-K) Parents are invited to read aloud to the class in their home language, with teachers supporting in English to scaffold comprehension for children who do not share that language. (Head Start)

B.   *Differences between Programs*

Although all classrooms incorporated children's home languages, the extent varied by program type, depending on the linguistic composition of the class and language background of the teachers. Where teachers shared a common home language with the children, it was used throughout the day to support instruction, social-emotional interactions, and routines. In these cases, as children were gaining skills and confidence in English, it was possible to maintain and further develop their home language. The Head Start teachers, more than the others, leveraged families and community members as home language resources in the classroom, thus expanding their ability to support children who spoke a range of home languages. In the private preschool classrooms, taught primarily by monolingual teachers, the incorporation of home languages was intended to cultivate metalinguistic awareness and an appreciation of multilingualism among all children, including the monolingual.

V.   Implications and Policy Recommendations

In order to situate the following recommendations for policy and practice, the Critical Ecology of the Early Childhood Profession framework put forth by education researchers Linda Miller, Carmen Dalli, and Mathias Urban is particularly useful.[68] In this framework, teachers are seen as knowledgeable professionals whose work is influenced by multiple contextual factors, including local classroom and school factors, families and local communities, and policies. Figure 1 presents a visual representation of how the critical ecology framework can be used to understand the different layers of policy recommendations outlined in this section. The first of these recommendations fall within the innermost layer, the *individual*, and include professional learning recommendations for teachers. The next set of recommendations move outward, focusing on classroom-level practices (*microsystem*) and local policies (*exosystem*), and the final set consider the *macrosystem,* which includes recommendations for national and state policies that support young DLL children in superdiverse classroom contexts.

Figure 1. Recommendations for Layers of Policy to Support DLLs in Superdiverse Preschool Classrooms

State and National
Multilingual Language
Policy
(macrosystem)

Local Policies that
Support
Multilingualism
(exosystem)

Classroom Practices
that Value and
Incorporate Home
Languages
(microsystem)

Teacher
Knowledge/
Asset-Oriented
Beliefs about
Bilingualism
(individual)

Source: Author rendering based on the critical ecology framework from Linda Miller, Carmen Dalli, and Mathias Urban, eds., *Early Childhood Grows Up: Towards a Critical Ecology of the Profession* (New York: Springer, 2012).

A.   *Professional Learning (Individual)*

In this study, participants included community-nominated exemplary preschool teachers who make their knowledge about teaching available to others in the wider educational community. With regard to language use, these expert teachers hold strong asset-oriented beliefs about the value of bilingualism. As more cohesive policies are developed that support the inclusion of home languages in classrooms, higher education and professional development programs need to pay attention to cultivating beliefs and dispositions among ECEC professionals, as well as pedagogical strategies targeting DLLs. As noted by scholars and researchers, all educators need particular knowledge and competencies if they are

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68   Linda Miller, Carmen Dalli, and Mathias Urban, eds., *Early Childhood Grows Up: Towards a Critical Ecology of the Profession* (New York: Springer, 2012). See also Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

to successfully support DLLs.[69] This study builds on these prior recommendations, and suggests that for ECEC educators to be fully prepared to work with young DLLs, teacher education and professional learning opportunities should focus on:

- nurturing beliefs that bilingualism and multilingualism are assets that should be supported in early childhood contexts;

- understanding that in superdiverse classrooms, teachers will need a broad and flexible array of strategies to include home languages, especially when they do not speak the same languages as the children;

- cultivating cultural competence and knowledge about how young bilinguals develop, including language and early literacy development, first- and second-language development, and appropriate assessment practices (including assessing both languages a child speaks);

- equipping teachers to gain nuanced knowledge about individual children and families, for example, through home visits, home language surveys, and ongoing dialogue; and

- continuing to learn from knowledgeable educators about specific classroom practices that support young DLL children, such as the strategies described in this report for including home languages in superdiverse classrooms.

B.   *Classroom-Level Structures and Practices (Microsystem)*

At the classroom level, teachers and teaching teams can build on their knowledge and professional learning to promote a culturally responsive, multilingual language environment that promotes learning for all children and supports DLLs. This includes:

- creating school or classroom structures to get to know children well, for example, by setting up home visits, administering a home language survey when a child joins the community, and continuing ongoing observation and conversation with the child and family over time— knowledge that can help teachers understand children's language abilities in their home language(s) and English, and develop a curriculum that promotes learning across all domains (physical, social-emotional, cognitive, language, and literacy);

- creating classroom routines that promote metalinguistic awareness and respect for multilingualism and multiculturalism, such as the examples provided in this study that made DLLs visible in the preschool classrooms and encouraged interactions among peers and with teachers;

- providing tailored supports for DLL children to acquire English in the classroom, for example, by offering one-on-one targeted language support during whole-group read-alouds; and

- inviting family and community members into the classroom to speak their home languages and share cultural activities, as in the examples from the Head Start classrooms.

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69 Espinosa, *Early Education for Dual Language Learners;* Lianna Pizzo and Mariela Páez, "Early Childhood Education and Care for Dual Language Learners," in *The Wiley Handbook of Early Childhood Development Programs, Practices, and Policies*, eds. Elizabeth Votruba-Drzal and Eric Dearing (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2017), 187; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, "Policy Statement on Supporting the Development of Children."

C.   Local/District Policies (Exosystem)

At the local level, district and program leaders should value the diversity of families they serve and support a multilingual language policy by:

- establishing intake processes to ensure that each child and family's language and cultural background is understood and incorporated into the program. This may be accomplished through procedures such as home language surveys,[70] home visits, and parent-teacher meetings.

- ensuring appropriate assessments for the DLL population, which include consideration of their first-language skills. These assessments may include observation-based assessments, screenings, and valid and reliable instruments for the DLL population. Programs should provide a list of assessment tools that are available for DLLs and hire qualified bilingual staff to administer these assessments. Although this may be challenging for low-incidence minority languages, the Head Start example of translating the Ages and Stages questionnaire in this study illustrates that in the absence of appropriate assessments, teachers can still draw upon community resources to ensure that assessments can at least be adapted to be conducted in a child's home language.

- establishing a process and structure for inviting family and community members to contribute their time and/or knowledge as language and cultural experts to the school community. Programs could establish a database that can help educators know where to turn to for support in translating classroom materials, providing in-classroom home language support, and communicating with families.

D.   National/State Policies (Macrosystem)

Every teacher should value and support children's home languages. In multilingual, superdiverse contexts, where dual-immersion and home-language-maintenance models are often not feasible given the diversity of languages represented, there is still a need to affirm and include all the children's languages in the classroom. For this reason, at the macro level, a multilingual language policy is needed to support young DLLs who attend preschool programs, regardless of program type. The core idea at the heart of this policy should be: Educators and children in superdiverse and multilingual preschool classrooms should have the flexibility to use their home languages as living languages in the classroom; the ways in which these languages are integrated should be informed by the language composition of the community, including teachers' and children's skills. This policy must be flexible enough to allow for local interpretation and adaptation based on the unique structures and populations of each program type.

In multilingual, superdiverse contexts … there is still a need to affirm and include all the children's languages in the classroom.

Moving forward, the ECEC field will require more than just intentional language use in the classroom. The recommendations this report presents take a multifaceted approach to building educator and program capacity through teacher training and development, the curriculum and classroom environment, and state and local policies. Given the many similarities found in this study across preschool program types, there is also promise in creating opportunities for programs to learn from one another's effective practices and join forces in creating high-quality educational experiences for DLL children.

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70   For example, see Patton O. Tabors and Mariela Páez, *One Child, Two Languages: Study Guide,* 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing Co., 2008).

Appendix

Table A-1. Early Literacy and Language Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Items, Sections, and Subscales

Items	Sections	Subscales
Item 1: Organization of classroom Item 2: Contents of classroom Item 3: Classroom management Item 4: Personnel	Section I: Classroom structure (maximum score = 20)	General classroom environment (maximum score = 35)
Item 5: Approaches to curriculum Item 6: Opportunities for child choice Item 7: Recognizing diversity in the classroom	Section II: Curriculum (maximum score = 15)	
Item 8: Discourse climate Item 9: Opportunities for extended conversations Item 10: Efforts to build vocabulary Item 11: Phonological awareness	Section III: Language environment (maximum score = 20)	Language and literacy (maximum score = 60)
Item 12: Organization of book area Item 13: Characteristics of books Item 14: Books for learning Item 15: Approaches to book reading Item 16: Quality of book reading	Section IV: Books and book reading (maximum score = 25)	
Item 17: Early writing environment Item 18: Support for children's writing Item 19: Environmental print	Section V: Print and early writing (maximum score = 15)	

Table A-2. Early Literacy and Language Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Subscores for Participating Classrooms

	Private Preschool 1	Private Preschool 2	Head Start 1	Head Start 2	Public Preschool 1	Public Preschool 2
Classroom Structure						
1. Organization of classroom	5	5	5	5	5	5
2. Contents of classroom	5	5	5	5	5	5
3. Classroom management	5	5	4	4	5	5
4. Personnel	5	5	4	4	5	5
Subtotal	20	20	18	18	20	20
Curriculum						
5. Approaches to curriculum	5	5	5	5	5	5
6. Opportunities for child choice and initiative	5	5	5	5	5	5
7. Recognizing diversity in classroom	5	5	5	4	5	4
Subtotal	15	15	15	14	15	14
The Language Environment						
8. Discourse climate	5	5	5	5	5	5
9. Opportunities for extended conversations	5	5	5	4	5	5
10. Efforts to build vocabulary	5	5	5	5	5	5
11. Phonological awareness	4	5	4	5	5	4
Subtotal	19	20	19	19	20	19
Books and Book Reading						
12. Organization of book area	5	4	5	5	5	4
13. Characteristics of books	5	5	5	5	5	5
14. Books for learning	5	5	5	5	4	5
15. Approaches to book reading	5	4	5	5	5	5
16. Quality of book reading	5	5	5	5	5	5
Subtotal	25	23	25	25	24	24
Print and Early Writing						
17. Early writing environment	4	5	4	5	5	5
18. Support for children's writing	4	5	4	5	5	5
19. Environmental print	5	5	5	5	5	5
Subtotal	13	15	13	15	15	15
Classroom Environmental Total	**35**	**35**	**33**	**32**	**35**	**34**
Language and Literacy Total	**57**	**58**	**57**	**59**	**59**	**58**

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