



Case Study: Dual Language Learner Field Building Project

BACKGROUND

In 2020, [Early Edge California](#) (Early Edge) and [Catalyst California](#) (Catalyst), formerly Advancement Project California, released the [Dual Language Learner \(DLL\) Policy Platform](#), which was a set of key short and long-term recommendations to center equity and better support children who are DLLs¹ at the state level in the Early Learning and Care system. This platform reflected a series of ongoing conversations with DLL experts and advocates from 2016 and before, building on a legacy of local bright spots and elevating key systems change needs. This effort was a collaboration bringing together the voices of key DLL and Early Learning experts and practitioners from across the state about what was needed to better support DLL children.

Many of the recommendations from the DLL Policy Platform were included in the [Master Plan for Early Learning and Care](#) (Master Plan), a 10-year roadmap for improving the state's Early Learning and Care system, which was released by Governor Gavin Newsom in December 2020. It was imperative that the Master Plan not become a document that would sit on the shelf, but rather one that would be implemented. In order to make this happen, with the generous support of Sobrato Philanthropies and the Heising-Simons Foundation, the two partner organizations began thinking through what it would take to move forward the DLL-specific recommendations in the Master Plan. The goals envisioned for this work were twofold: first identifying a short-term action plan for implementing the recommendations, and second, bringing on additional advocacy partners to build capacity for collective action.

THE BIRTH OF THE FIELD BUILDING PROJECT

From this idea, the DLL Field Building project (also known as the DLL Master Plan Advocates) was born in 2021. A set of eight key partners were identified that were either a) focused on Early Learning and Care advocacy and interested in supporting DLLs in their advocacy priorities or b) focused on English learner advocacy at the K-12 level and had an interest in expanding their work to include Early Learning. Partners included: [Californians Together](#), [EdVance College](#), [Kidango](#), [Parent Institute for Quality Education](#) (PIQE), [Sobrato Early Academic Language](#) (SEAL), [The Children's Partnership](#), [The Education Trust West](#), and [UNITE-LA](#). These partners co-shaped a 2-year action plan to move DLL recommendations in the Master Plan forward and met quarterly to identify and mobilize on opportunities for joint advocacy guided by the action plan.

As the project gained momentum, partners identified several areas for support, including: the need for stipends for participating partners to support their engagement in the project, funding to bring additional partners onto the project, and funding to create two committees to engage and elevate the voices of DLL families and practitioners in shaping policy priorities. Another key piece was the need to build partner capacity around DLL content, policy landscape, and identifying opportunities to uplift the importance of culturally and linguistically affirming practices that better respond to the diversity of DLLs' languages and cultures across the state.

Sobrato Philanthropies provided partial funding to carry out these efforts over a two-year period. Early Edge and Catalyst were also able to secure funding from the California Community Foundation and First 5 Los Angeles to supplement the additional funding needs.

MOVING FROM 2 TO 20 ORGANIZATIONS COMMITTED TO THE WORK

With this additional funding, the group has grown to include six additional partners: [Abriendo Puertas](#), [Asian American Advancing Justice Southern California](#) (AJSOCAL), [Black Californians United for Early Care & Education](#), [First 5 California](#), [First 5 Los Angeles](#)², and [Partnership for Education, Articulation, and Coordination Through Higher Education](#) (PEACH). The project has been gaining momentum across the state and more partners have expressed interest in joining, and have even committed to joining as programmatic partners while we seek additional funding, including [Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles](#), [Jumpstart](#), [Para Los Niños](#), and [The Bay Area Council](#), bringing the group to 20 partners total, including Early Edge and Catalyst.

COLLECTIVE WORK AND SUCCESSES

The partners continue to meet regularly to move forward the action plan's goals, which are focused on four key areas:

1. DLLs will be identified across all care settings in California's mixed-delivery system of early care and education (ECE) services.
2. California's ECE and P-3 infrastructure includes explicit focus on meeting the needs of DLL children.
3. Early educators have access to high-quality, culturally relevant child development training focused on serving DLLs.
4. Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) effectively prepare the ECE workforce to support DLLs and demonstration projects/model programs serve as effective tools for building the capacity of faculty and preparation programs.

COLLECTIVE WORK AND SUCCESSES (CONT.)

Partners also engage in a series of “lunch and learn” opportunities on several topics, including the state budget, linguistic justice for Asian and Pacific Islander children and families, and linguistic Justice for Black children and families. Partners also participated in two site visits to experience and learn from model DLL early learning and care programs at [Westminster School District](#) and [Long Beach Unified School District](#).

The group continues to represent coordinated, collective voice to elevate the assets and needs of DLLs at numerous state efforts, including:

- [The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing](#) commission meetings: ensuring a strong focus on multilingual learners in the teaching performance expectations of the new [PK-3 ECE Specialist Instruction Credential](#) and in the revisions to the Child Development Permit led by the [Child Development Permit Workgroup](#).
- [California’s rate reform and quality work](#) led by the CA Department of Social Services (CDSS): raising the needs of DLLs to both the Rate and Quality Advisory Panel and Workgroup. DLLs were included as a definition of the base rate for the development of the alternative methodology. Fourteen partner organizations signed onto a [joint letter](#) addressed to CDSS to ensure DLLs and their families' needs were included in the base rate of the alternative methodology.
- [The UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup](#): emphasizing the importance of including a focus on support for the home language, bilingual programs, and support for the multilingual workforce. Many of the points that the group collectively raised were included in the workgroup’s final [report](#).
- [The Cradle to Career Data System](#) Governing Board: sharing the importance of the “cradle” portion of the system and advocating for the inclusion of DLL data and specifically data being collected as part of DLL identification through [AB 1363](#) and [AB 393](#) implementation.
- [Child Care Development Fund \(CCDF\) State Plan](#): providing feedback to ensure the 2024-2027 state plan strengthens its focus on DLL children and families, including supporting the expansion of dual language programs, as well as the professional development and preparation of early educators and providers.

Throughout these and other statewide initiatives, partners provided public comment and shared joint advocacy letters uplifting the needs of DLLs.

NEXT STEPS

The partners are excited to continue the work and expand their collective impact as a group in 2024 and beyond. This includes aligning policy advocacy strategies in support of DLLs and deepening equity and linguistic justice in California’s Early Learning and Care system.

For more information or questions, visit us at www.earlyedgecalifornia.org or contact us at info@earlyedgecalifornia.org.

¹ Dual Language Learners (DLLs) are children whose first language is a language other than English or children who are developing two or more languages, one of which may be English.

² Neither First Five California nor First Five Los Angeles receive funding to participate in this project given their state agency status.