

PRIORITIZING MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS: HOW INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS MEET THE NEEDS OF BILINGUAL STUDENTS AND ENGLISH LEARNERS



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INTRODUCTION

America's K-12 school system is failing multilingual learners. The best data comes from one of their major subgroups, English learners, whose high school graduation rates trail the national average by 15 percentage points.¹ English learners, who currently total around 5 million students, are also far less likely to take advanced and dual-credit classes in high school.² The reasons are numerous and complex, but these students routinely experience a cascade of challenges, including stigma, services often not well suited for their language needs, and unequal access to rigorous learning experiences.³ Together, these experiences culminate to push students out of schools.⁴ And beyond students, families and communities bear the brunt of generational language loss and trauma.⁵ School systems should be places where students develop necessary academic and language skills, but multilingual students' linguistic skills are, at best, largely ignored, and, at worst, denied the opportunity to expand and flourish.

Some schools are better at supporting and encouraging multilingual students by actively designing creative and unconventional approaches that center multilingual learners' strengths and needs. These schools are part of the Canopy project, an initiative to build collective knowledge about schools pursuing more equitable and student-centered approaches (see sidebar on page 3).

WHO ARE "MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS"?

We use some commonly accepted terms in this report to refer to specific student groups under the "multilingual learners" umbrella, recognizing that labels are imperfect and often are in flux.⁶

English learners. These are students formally classified through state-approved methods who receive federally mandated language services. They are tested until they reach state benchmarks for formal reclassification to Fluent English Proficient status. We use the terms "EL-classified" and "students classified as English learners" to distinguish this group.

Emergent bilinguals. These are students learning a second language, but not all of them are necessarily classified as English learners. As a result, they may not face the same challenges as EL-classified students, whose experiences may be influenced by the label assigned to them. To center the impact of formal classification, we do not use this term to replace "English learner."

Newcomer or recently arrived learners. These students are recent immigrants who are new to the country and the U.S. schooling system. These students may be refugees, asylum seekers, or may have experienced interruptions to their formal education.

Heritage speakers or heritage learners. These students have knowledge of, or exposure to, a non-English home or native language. Their proficiency in their home language can vary dramatically and often reflects their access to learning opportunities.

¹ Office of English language acquisition (2023, June).

² United States Department of Education (2023, June).

³ Artiles et al., 2002; Cioé-Peña, 2017; Kano & Kangas, 2014; Martínez-Álvarez, 2019; Umansky & Avelar, 2022

⁴ Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Rodriguez et al., 2020

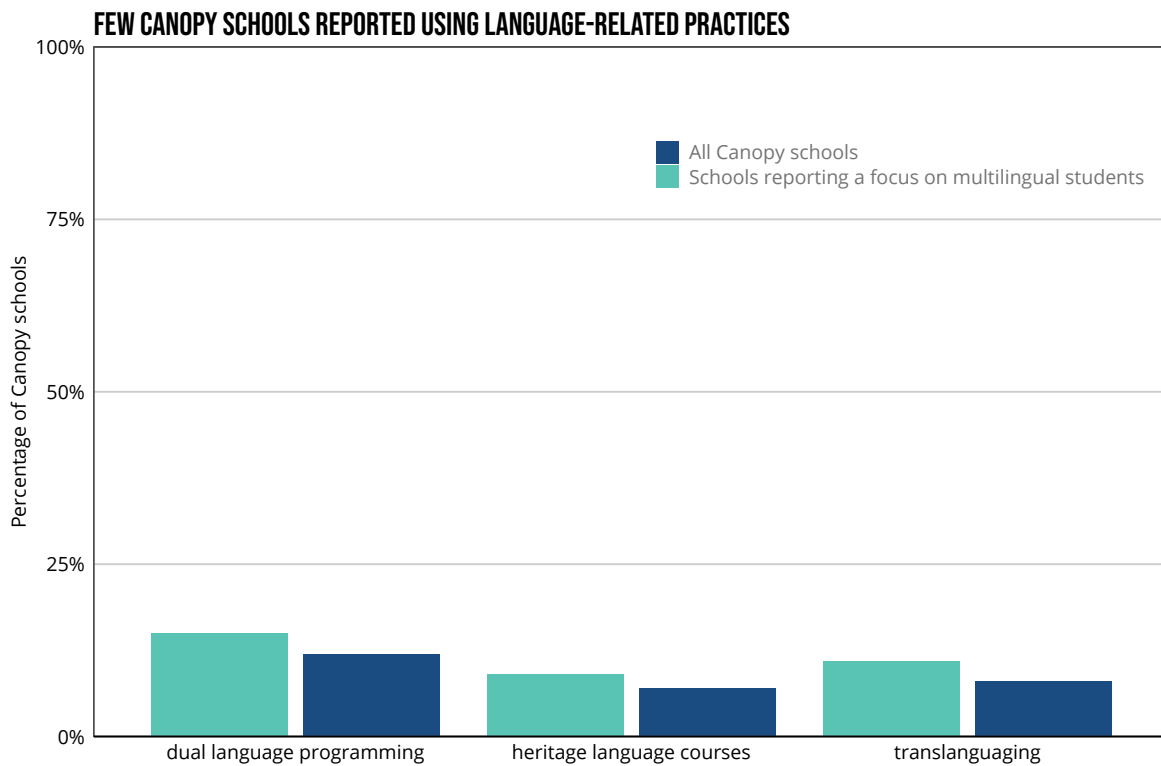
⁵ Lee, 2013; Nesteruk, 2010; Suarez, 2002

⁶ García, 2019; García et al., 2021

WHAT IS THE CANOPY PROJECT?

The **Canopy project** is a collaborative research effort, stewarded by the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) and Transcend, to build collective knowledge about more equitable and student-centered approaches in schools. The project first invites a diverse group of education organizations nationwide to nominate learning environments whose work they believe to be promising. Then, the project sends an annual survey to leaders from the nominated learning environments asking them to share more about their work and the practices they implement at a school-wide level. You can learn more about this methodology [on the Canopy website](#).

One of the goals of the Canopy project is to highlight innovations aimed at advancing equity. The majority of Canopy schools (76%) reported they are designing their learning environments to better engage and support historically marginalized students. Similarly, 73% of Canopy schools also reported that they are designing classrooms to fully include learners who may otherwise be segregated. Among these schools, nearly 7 in 10 reported that they are focusing on students classified as English learners and/or multilingual students. However, the three practices related to language instruction in the Canopy survey were not frequently identified by leaders of this group of schools as one of the “top practices” they most highly prioritized.⁷



⁷ These practices are dual language programming (a form of bilingual education in which students are taught literacy and content in two languages), heritage language courses (courses designed to support reading, writing, and speaking for students’ heritage or home language, similar to English language arts for English speakers), and translanguaging (students are encouraged to use all languages or dialects they know to make meaning, communicate, and participate in schooling without separation of languages).



“We want students to be living democratic values of justice and inclusivity and equity right now. Not when they graduate, not after college.”

- Jeremy Ault, Escuela Verde, Milwaukee, WI

How schools envision inclusion for multilingual learners

The schools we spoke to are prioritizing multilingualism, not just English proficiency, for students classified as English learners, as well as newcomers and heritage speakers. These leaders cared greatly about developing students’ English proficiency to navigate a predominantly English-speaking society. However, English language development and fluency was not the way they described their schools’ purpose. Bilingualism, biliteracy, and preserving students’ heritage languages occupied center stage, even for schools without dual-language programs or schools where multilingual students were the minority of the student population.

If so many Canopy schools report a focus on multilingual learners, but so few of them also implement language-related practices, what other practices are they using to support multilingual learners? We identified a smaller subset of these schools that selected designing for multilingual learners as part of their core model and then interviewed leaders from 13 of them about how they designed their schools to prioritize multilingual students. Our questions explored:

- How the leaders envision “meaningful inclusion” of multilingual learners.
- Defining/specifying the actions schools are taking to support multilingual learners.
- Identifying challenges to supporting multilingual learners as a school-wide priority.

After we analyzed the interview transcripts using thematic analysis, we found that while schools employed different approaches to serve their specific communities, all or nearly all the leaders were dedicated to centering students’ linguistic skills and prioritizing bilingualism and biliteracy. These school leaders were committed to opening pathways for students and helping them achieve their goals.

CANOPY SCHOOLS FOCUSED ON MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS

Leaders from the following schools spoke to us about how their organizations think about and design environments for multilingual learners. Thank you to:

- Aventura Community School in Nashville, TN
- Bostonia Global K-14 in El Cajon, CA
- CHIME Institute’s Schwarzenegger Community in Woodland Hills, CA
- Escuela Verde in Milwaukee, WI
- Flushing International High School in New York, NY
- Keres Children’s Learning Center in Cochiti Pueblo, NM
- La Promesa in Houston, TX
- Las Américas ASPIRA Academy in Newark, DE
- Margarita Muñiz Academy in Boston, MA
- Prospect Academy in Arvada, CO
- Robert F. Smith STEAM Academy in Denver, CO
- San Luis High School in San Luis, AZ
- Tapestry Public Charter School in Doraville, GA

Many school leaders said their biggest organizational challenge was shifting away from viewing English proficiency as the most important goal. They and their staff members saw firsthand how the K-12 schooling system is designed to focus on English language development by deprioritizing students' other/native languages, which often prevents multilingual learners from reaching their full potential. Leaders learned from existing research that relying on English proficiency alone can work against language acquisition and multilingualism.⁸ While researchers are still debating the extent to which bilingual education benefits students, there is a large body of evidence showing English proficiency as the main goal harms them—and leaders we interviewed prioritized nurturing students' multilingualism to mitigate these harms.

HOW MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS ARE HARMED IN THE CURRENT SYSTEM

Understanding our school leaders' shift in mindset requires some knowledge of how K-12 systems typically serve multilingual students. Multilingual students are typically first identified through home language surveys, which triggers an assessment to determine whether they should be classified as "English learners," regardless of whether English is one of the languages spoken at home. Because of this, many researchers and educators believe multilingual students are systematically sorted into a category of learner that emphasizes skills they are lacking. For example, these students essentially have to prove their English language proficiency in ways monolingual native English-speaking students do not,⁹ despite evidence that educator/tester bias can influence their scores on English proficiency tests¹⁰ as well as influence later decisions about student reclassification.¹¹

Students formally classified as English learners receive specific services, including English language development (ELD) instruction, which is usually a standalone course. In high school, ELD classes often conflict with the timing of core content classes that count toward graduation, and may also conflict with advanced courses necessary for college competitiveness. Younger students pulled from class for ELD services may also lose valuable core content instruction, time with their peers, or opportunities for elective classes in their interest area.

Beyond course conflicts, stigma and bias deeply shape students' experiences and opportunities to learn.¹² Multilingual students may also face disadvantages because of bias or stigma about their English language abilities.¹³ For example, many people still mistakenly believe that students with limited English skills will learn more material if they master English before learning other content taught in the language. But research from as far back as 2005 suggests that the depth and breadth of prior exposure to high-quality instruction is a stronger predictor of academic achievement than language proficiency for high school students classified as English learners.¹⁴ Despite this, students classified or perceived as English learners commonly experience exclusionary tracking, which means schools disproportionately and systematically track, or place, them in remedial classes.¹⁵

⁸ August & Shanahan, 2006; Collier & Thomas, 2014; Umansky & Reardon, 2014

⁹ Flores & Rosa, 2015

¹⁰ Koyama & Menken, 2013

¹¹ Estrada & Wang, 2018

¹² Kibler & Valdés, 2016

¹³ Brooks, 2018

¹⁴ Callahan, 2005

¹⁵ Umansky, 2016

What are schools doing to support multilingual learners?

In our public schooling system, language development has been treated as a zero-sum game, where focusing on one language obstructs the development of the other. But the school leaders we interviewed drew on existing research and their own and other schools' experience to reject that notion — instead, believing that students build on existing skills to incorporate new learning. They also believe it's important for schools to honor and leverage the benefits of students' home languages. For them, recognizing the value of multilingualism and nurturing language abilities is not a zero-sum game. On the contrary, language skills are dynamic and interconnected. School leaders believe fostering a supportive multilingual environment bolsters overall language proficiency and has additional social benefits as students' full identities are welcomed and valued in schools. Existing research backs up this belief.¹⁶

"Anything like inclusion is difficult, and it's very imperfect, and it actually looks different from year to year. ... We understand inclusion as an action verb, so we always want to be thinking about what are the actionable steps that we as a staff can take to be inclusive."

- Jeremy Ault, Escuela Verde, Milwaukee, WI

For the Canopy school leaders we spoke to, all students of all abilities sharing physical space in classrooms was just the first step to meaningful inclusion. They sought to create communities where cultivating inclusivity informed school decision-making. Notably, leaders relied on existing research on inclusive practices and the input from other schools. "We're relying on what educational research tells us is most effective for all learners," said Erin Studer, a leader at CHIME Institute in Northridge, CA, "Not just our multilingual learners, but all learners, everybody in the room."

Schoolwide commitments to inclusion often guided decisions on addressing the needs of diverse populations and influenced professional development for staff. Aventura Community School, a new elementary school in Nashville, TN, that offers dual language instruction in English and Spanish, worked hard to build a team of bilingual employees who receive year-round training. For them, inclusion meant opening a school with 90% of staff members fluent in both languages able to build community, support dual-language literacy, and allow families to participate in their student's education.



¹⁶ García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017; Sanders et al., 2018

In secondary schools, pursuing inclusion sometimes meant restructuring master schedules. Because English language proficiency has often been misunderstood as academic competency, many high schools have historically scheduled English proficiency classes to be held at the same time as more challenging classes, which means students learning English are often unable to enroll in honors courses, college credit courses, or coursework that could better position them for college. Instead, multilingual students are frequently scheduled to take remedial-level or English language development (ELD) classes.¹⁷ Robert F. Smith STEAM Academy in Denver, CO, builds a master schedule that reduces scheduling conflicts by integrating ELD in all classes, which helps students receive language support they need while they simultaneously pursue rigorous coursework.

“Ideally, all of the courses would be coded in a way that allows kids to receive ELD support as well as honors credit.”

- Shakira Abney-Wisdom, Robert F. Smith STEAM Academy

Flushing International High School in New York City increased multilingual students’ access to advanced academic content by offering college courses during the day instead of after school. The school changed the schedule after reviewing tracking data that revealed enrollment disparities. “We initially offered college classes after school, but we found that many students were unable to attend due to work or other obligations,” said Kevin Hesselstine. “Recently we began to offer some of the college classes during the school day, which has allowed more students to participate. As a result, we are beginning to see a leveling off in the disproportionality of who has access to college classes and those who do not.”

Extended learning and support

Second language development takes a long time; some estimates suggest it takes students four to seven years to achieve full proficiency.¹⁸ Schools are responding to this by designing spaces that can offer students more years of support. For example, Bostonia Global in El Cajon, CA, offers programming starting in transitional kindergarten,

¹⁷ Kano & Kangas, 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2020

¹⁸ Jia et al., 2002; Thompson, 2017



extending through elementary, middle and high school grades. At Las Américas ASPIRA Academy, a school in Newark, DE, biliteracy instruction starts in elementary school, with a K-5 dual language immersion program, followed by a 6-12 language continuation program. The Keres Children’s Learning Center in New Mexico—which is focused on revitalizing the language spoken by the Keres Pueblo Indian tribes—recently expanded to serve children from infancy to age 18.

In Houston, La Promesa started as a two-year academy to help newcomer students develop their English skills before entering high school. The model is common in Texas, a large state with many immigrants. But the leader of La Promesa noticed that students who transitioned often faltered in high school without sustained support, which prompted the academy to pursue expanding into a full-fledged high school with a Spanish-English dual-language program that could offer some students more time to develop full biliteracy. “We needed to navigate the system and understand, how can we keep them for more than two years and not have to send them back to their comprehensive high schools when we knew that was a system that was not working for them,” said Ana Fernanda Flores-Bolívar, the principal of La Promesa.

In Doraville, GA, Tapestry Public Charter School serves students in grades 6-12 and developed transition task forces made up of parents, teachers, community members, board members, and an internship coordinator to develop effective strategies for supporting students transitioning from sixth to seventh grade, as well as preparing high schoolers for transitions into their postsecondary lives—a particularly difficult period for many graduates, who often need help with decision-making and navigating

options for pursuing training, more education, or full-time work. Students are exposed to various career exploration opportunities throughout the transition planning process, which culminates in a senior year internship to provide students with real-world experience in their interest area.

Affirming and supporting multilingualism

School leaders are creating language-affirming communities that develop students’ heritage languages. For some, such as Keres Children’s Language Center in New Mexico, this meant creating an environment that entirely supports students’ heritage language development. For others, like La Promesa in Texas, this meant expanding into a comprehensive, dual-language high school. In San Luis, AZ, San Luis High School emphasizes furthering students’ skills in their heritage language—the school offers a “Spanish for Fluent Speakers” course in addition to AP Spanish Language and AP Spanish Literature courses.



Some of the Canopy school leaders referenced a newer but growing educational approach known as “translanguaging,” which allows students to use any language or dialect during classroom discussions or to make connections using vocabulary in their home language.¹⁹ In Wisconsin, the Milwaukee charter school Escuela Verde is best known for its project-based learning model that connects students to the community and real-time sustainability issues. Nevertheless, the school’s mission statement directly endorses “developing biliteracy” and honoring students’ “linguistic and cultural identities by engaging in translanguaging practices.”

Jeremy Ault, Escuela Verde’s special education lead, said that at a recent senior presentation night — an annual event for students to practice explaining their research to strangers — students were presenting in Spanish and English. The previous year, he said, a student presented in her native Ojibwe language. “We have teachers that are bilingual,” Ault said. “We emphasize that students can present and do everything in their native language. We celebrate that.”

Many leaders we spoke to reported using multilingual approaches to evaluate academic progress in the languages students know. Testing only in English can lead to biased assessments, primarily measuring English language proficiency rather than content knowledge.²⁰ According to Natalie Morosi from Aventura Community School in Nashville, TN, assessing young students’ literacy and math skills in more than one language provides a more comprehensive view. The school incorporates these multilingual assessments to supplement the outcomes of state standardized assessments, which

begin in third grade. This strategy ensures children’s language skills are accounted for, rendering a better portrayal of children’s skills and knowledge.

Ambitious goals and high expectations

School leaders frequently referenced the ambitious goals and drive they observed in multilingual students, and they spoke about their dedication to opening pathways toward those goals. “Our job in education is to support students in terms of who they are and where they want to go, and to develop that world around them,” said Nerel Winter, principal from Bostonia Global.

School leaders spoke about designing learning environments that expose students to what the world looks like outside of the classroom through course offerings and internship opportunities that result in professional certificates, college credit and industry training. Flushing International High School and Robert F. Smith STEAM Academy both offer dual credit courses.

Some schools offer state seals of biliteracy that honor students’ linguistic knowledge with formal certification. State [seals of biliteracy](#), which originated in California in 2011 and are currently approved in almost every state, officially recognize a student’s mastery of two languages, whether they are multilingual students mastering English or native English speakers learning a foreign language. Additionally, the seal of biliteracy provides students with a potential asset to their future career trajectories.

¹⁹ García et al., 2017, 2021; Otheguy et al., 2015

²⁰ Abedi et al., 2002, 2003; Sanchez et al., 2013



Personalized learning

Personalized learning models that support and center multilingual students are a popular design choice for some of these schools, which is unusual because most EL-classified students rarely receive much more than differentiated instruction based on their level of English proficiency.²¹ Bostonia Global, for instance, offers individualized learning plans for each student's language needs, and some receive additional plans for other academic areas. Las Américas ASPIRA Academy, a K-12 school, goes beyond basic data disaggregation practices — for example, looking at outcomes for all students categorized as English learners — by analyzing outcomes and experiences based on students' intersectional identities, such as students with disabilities who are categorized as English learners and are newcomers. This allows schools to ensure each student develops a sense of belonging within their school community.

Tapestry Public Charter School also provides students with individualized learning plans, and the school groups students into multi-age “houses” in middle school and “academies” in high school. Students self-select into houses and academies based on interests like drama, art, music, robotics, and media production. For high school students, academies are tied to career pathways that can earn them qualification seals on their diplomas.

Integrating English Language Development (ELD)

Many leaders said their schools were integrating ELD into all core academics, or incorporating teachers with specialized training across subjects, and eliminating the practice of tracking EL students into less rigorous coursework. Bostonia Global has incorporated push-in English language learning support to every classroom, with ELD teachers and special education teachers co-teaching with the general education instructor. Aventura Community School also uses co-teaching to support language development in content classrooms, so that learners with language needs can receive individual help or small-group support from a language specialist and/or a paraprofessional.

Integrating ELD into all classes can be especially helpful for newcomer students, for whom bridging techniques and multilingual-focused teaching strategies can help them access familiar content, like science and math, in a new language. La Promesa uses techniques such as contextualized learning, sharing content in one language followed by the other, and providing resources in students' primary language, allowing them to focus on the task at hand without cognitive overload and anxiety. Fernanda Flores-Bolívar from La Promesa states that students often feel overwhelmed by the abundance of new content in a new language, which can lead to disengagement. To address this concern, Flores-Bolívar emphasizes the importance of introducing concepts first in their native language: “The Spanish is how we're building their background, so when they go into their English classes, they have a sense of success.”



²¹ Rickabaugh, 2016

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School leaders told us they know that multilingual learners need access to their full linguistic repertoire to facilitate their learning. But they often face particular challenges — both structural and ideological — to accomplishing that in K-12 school systems built for monolingual learners.

Assessment and testing

One major challenge is maneuvering around English proficiency as the goal for federally- or state-mandated testing and language services, particularly for students classified as English learners. Newcomer students must often take high-stakes tests that determine what classes they can access or if they are eligible for graduation, but these tests don't effectively take into account the long and difficult journey to proficiency in English. Kevin Hesselstine, principal of Flushing International High School, said that students who enroll in the school by 10th grade are expected to graduate in three years. "This can be frustrating for students still learning English when they are expected to take the English language arts Regents exam in 11th grade, even though they haven't yet had the opportunity to learn all the material," Hesselstine said. "Our students can and will pass the exams, but this can take some time."

Leaders also critiqued other aspects of testing and accountability policies that prioritize a narrow set of academic outcomes and undervalue certain skills their schools are designed to teach. To compensate, Bostonia Global uses competency-based education to track student progress in areas like the ability to critically read, pose questions, observe patterns, seek perspectives, prioritize well-being, collaborate with others, and tell their own stories. These competencies support students' understanding of themselves, their culture, and their future aspirations alongside traditional content-knowledge and academic skills.

Even just when measuring academic outcomes, schools struggled to find bilingual tests and curriculum. Large norm-referenced assessments such as the AP Spanish exam or the Avant Stamp were the most commonly reported assessment tools, but these evaluations are not designed to inform instruction. Moreover, research indicates a dearth of universal screening measures and curriculum-based measures in multiple languages to guide instructional decision-making. For many, like Margarita Muñoz Academy, this means relying on teacher-created assessments or bilingual portfolios to evaluate student progress. But this is a strenuous endeavor for teachers who are already overworked and not easily replicable. At Keres Children's Language Center, which studies an oral heritage language without existing evaluation resources, educators have created their own tool to monitor and celebrate students' development in the Keres language and culture.

Bias and misconceptions

Many school leaders said one of their biggest challenges was societal beliefs and attitudes. Leaders across the board pointed to common misconceptions about language learning that have deeply harmed multilingual students and their families historically; for example, the notion that parents should not speak to their children in their home language to encourage English development. Some of these beliefs were rooted in perceptions about multilingualism and multilingual education itself, including widespread skepticism about the benefits of multilingual education despite a robust evidence base. Bias and skepticism opened schools to criticisms about heritage or bilingual teaching as "not real" learning.

In some cases, partner organizations tended to overlook multilingual students for internship opportunities and college preparatory programs, partly influenced by negative perceptions of students learning English. This made it difficult to find committed industry and community partners to provide opportunities for all students in the school, and not just “high flyers.” Dania Vázquez from Margarita Muñiz Academy said, “We want to make sure that our students who are learning English also have the opportunity to participate, because many of them are able, they’re just learning English. That doesn’t mean they shouldn’t have access to this opportunity. But in order to do that, that means we’re asking the system to change.”

Hiring

Nearly all school leaders said finding high-quality, multilingual teachers is a major challenge. This stems from not only nationwide staffing shortages, but also systemic disinvestment in training multilingual teachers and a lack of support for multilingualism in K-12 education. Some states require bilingual educators to show a broader range of skills in two languages than monolingual English candidates have to show in just one. Additionally, anti-bilingual education policies in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in fewer graduates well-prepared to follow bilingual teacher preparation programs. In Arizona, Principal Rob Jankowski of San Luis High School recruited future multilingual staff by encouraging graduating seniors to pursue teaching; today about 75% of new hires are alumni.

Leaders also struggled to find highly trained teachers who reflected students’ racial and cultural diversity and who honored multilingual students’ assets. Leaders said it was a challenge for them and their staff

members to unlearn the stigma and bias ingrained in traditional school systems that commonly frames multilingual students as deficient. For some, this was a pivotal moment, and they recognized the difficulty in challenging teachers to unlearn the pressure to prioritize English development.

Complex barriers facing students

Many multilingual students are stigmatized and disproportionately affected by issues like poverty, systemic racism, and trauma. For newcomer and recently arrived students, these issues are compounded by the difficulty of transitioning to a new country and society. And some adolescent students must balance school work with other priorities to support their families, such as part-time jobs and household duties. School leaders often struggled to find ways to help students facing these challenges maintain access to valuable school-related opportunities.

“Even within the confines and restrictions of an oppressive system, we’re still able to innovate and make impact for kids. So I can’t even imagine what that would be if those barriers didn’t exist...”

- Shakira Abney-Wisdom, Robert F. Smith STEAM Academy



---□ Conclusion

School leaders in Canopy who are designing inclusive learning environments for multilingual learners illustrate a key mindset shift: They see multilingualism as both a learning goal and cultural asset. They encourage students' abilities in multiple languages, including their home, native, or heritage languages, rather than exclusively chasing the goal of English proficiency. These approaches aim to counteract the harm that EL-classified students and other multilingual learners experience in English-only education systems.

Inclusive schools encourage students to use all the linguistic skills at their disposal to advance their learning across academic subjects. Schools are also not exclusively relying on "language"-related practices. They're seeking out work-based learning and college preparatory experiences for multilingual learners, developing instructional models that afford much more personalization, and ensuring student access to rigorous coursework.

Given the growing population of multilingual learners in the U.S. and the harms they too often experience in school, K-12 schools should embrace these kinds of attitudes and approaches as opportunities to boost student progress and belonging. But school leaders told us they cannot accomplish their full visions without meaningful changes to policy and practice.

School and system leaders committed to supporting multilingual learners to thrive should allow students to use their native or home languages, in addition to English, to learn content in other subjects. Dual language programs and heritage language courses help support this goal in the immediate term, but full inclusion of multilingual learners means ensuring they have full access to rigorous coursework alongside necessary language support. English language development (ELD) services should be integrated throughout all courses to support this goal. Lastly, leaders should design data systems and instructional supports that take into account multilingual learners' many-faceted identities. Rejecting one-dimensional categories could allow schools to consider many other experiences, like newcomer status, migrant or transnational backgrounds, cultural traditions, or a long-term English learner status. Since research consistently demonstrates that children with developmental disabilities can become proficient in two or more languages with sufficient learning opportunities, school and system leaders should pay particular attention to ensuring that multilingual students with disabilities are not ignored.

Policymakers and funders have key roles to play in enabling schools to enact promising practices for multilingual learners without constantly swimming upstream. First, given the underinvestment in training multilingual teachers, leaders should fund training and pipeline programs to produce teachers

whose backgrounds reflect the linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity of multilingual students. Likewise, they should invest in bilingual and culturally responsive curriculum and assessment resources, which schools often struggle to find. Policymakers also have a critical role to play in shifting accountability systems to prioritize biliteracy and bilingualism. Key changes to policy should authorize the development and use of assessments in multiple languages, allow schools to measure academic progress separately from English language proficiency, and create more flexible opportunities to assess learners' needs and progress, rather than basing major decisions on high-stakes tests. Lastly, funders and local policymakers (including civic leaders) can incentivize community organizations and businesses to develop college and career pathway programs that enable multilingual learners to obtain credentials and specializations.

There is no blueprint to follow yet, but we have a choice. Accepting policies and practices that prioritize monolingual English learning and narrowly define success for multilingual learners will certainly undermine those learners' potential. Instead, championing policies and practices that leverage all learners' linguistic resources — as these Canopy schools are doing — is a step toward positioning millions of students for a far better chance of academic success.



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