

QSLA's DLL Initiative

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES
FOR EARLY EDUCATORS OF
DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS



2021-22 Provider Brief

This brief contains highlights of the QSLA DLL Initiative's work and impact during the 2021-22 program year, and is intended for members of the ECE Provider Community.

Dual Language Learners

In early education, Dual Language Learners (DLLs) are defined as children from birth to five years old who are learning two languages simultaneously, or who are learning a second language in addition to their first, or home, language.¹ The term "Dual Language Learner" emphasizes that these children are still in the early phases of language development and are rapidly gaining fluency in both languages. Research shows that children who speak multiple languages demonstrate cognitive advantages in both childhood and adulthood² and perform better on problem-solving tasks requiring attention and executive control.³ They may also demonstrate advantages in social-emotional competence.⁴ Bilingualism benefits children in many ways!

Around 60% of children from zero to 5 years old in California are DLLs.⁵ The proportion of DLLs in California is expected to rise in coming years, increasing the need for trained early educators and K-12 teachers, and for family resources.⁶

Historically, DLLs and their teachers have not received enough support from state and educational systems to help these children reach their cognitive and educational potential.

Early educators and K-12 teachers need DLL-specific training to best address the differing needs of children in multilingual programs and classrooms.⁷

Dual Language Learners with fewer DLL peers in their classrooms demonstrate both academic and social-emotional benefits when their early education programs prioritize family engagement efforts.⁸



The QSLA Dual Language Learner Initiative

The Quality Start Los Angeles (QSLA) DLL Initiative is a collaborative project of several organizational partners: First 5 Los Angeles (F5LA), Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles (CCALA), and Child360. The overarching goal of the DLL Initiative in 2021-2022 was to provide support and resources to early childhood education (ECE) professionals and families of DLLs throughout Los Angeles County. The partners' commitment to this collaboration allowed for alignment of DLL content, resources, communications, and evaluation materials across a variety of supports serving multiple populations (families, program directors, early educators, ECE coaches) in multiple languages (English, Spanish, Mandarin, and Cantonese). This comprehensive alignment of materials ensured that early learning programs and families received consistent messaging and resources in support of their DLL children.

The impact of the first year of the QSLA DLL Initiative was inspiring!

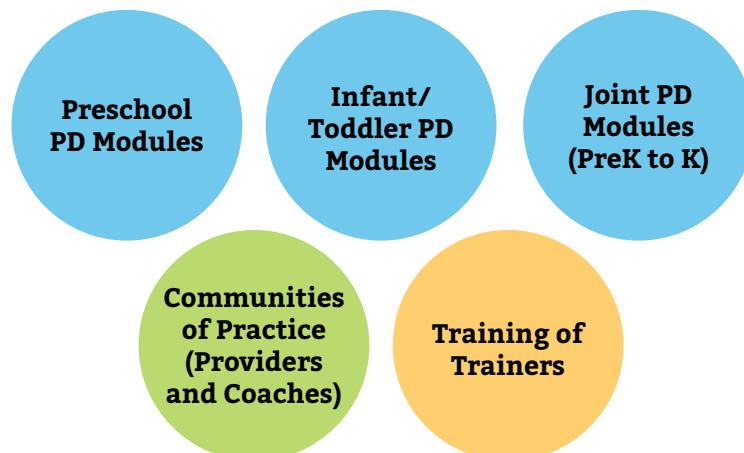
The work of the QSLA DLL Initiative reached hundreds of ECE providers, thousands of young children, and over 240,000 families, most of whom were in Los Angeles County zip codes identified as "high need" (areas of low income, containing a high percentage of families that speak two languages).

ECE professionals and families had access to over 100 hours of training content across four languages.

The Initiative served providers working at child care centers and Family Child Care (FCC) homes. The Initiative used targeted outreach, as well as partnerships with LA County Resource and Referral agencies and Family Child Care Home Education Networks agencies, to contact providers at FCCs, who often have less access to training opportunities.

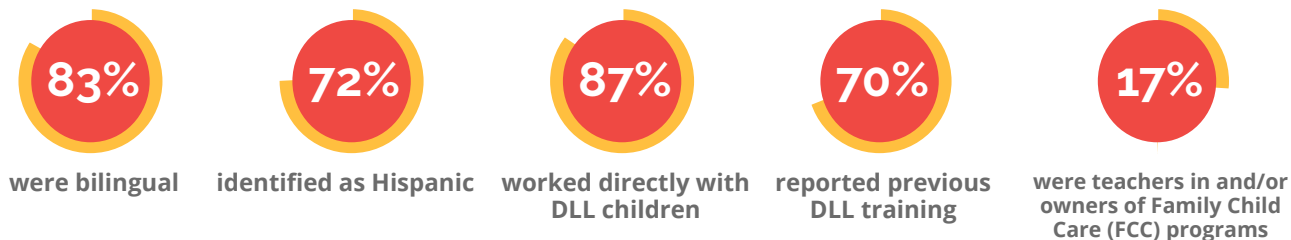
Professional Development (PD) for ECE Professionals

The QSLA DLL Initiative offered multiple professional development opportunities for ECE professionals in both English and Spanish throughout 2021-22. These trainings included research-based content on DLL language development, classroom instructional strategies, family engagement strategies, and the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism. Five types of PD opportunities were offered to both center-based and family child care (FCC) providers:





The DLL Preschool, Infant/Toddler, and Joint PD Modules were separate sets of multiple one- to two-hour trainings (“modules”). Each module included informational slides and discussion opportunities, and was presented by professional trainers. Over 300 participants attended one or more of these modules. Of the 274 participants who completed demographic surveys:



The DLL Preschool PD Modules (10 modules, each offered in English and Spanish) provided ECE professionals with research-based DLL strategies on topics from early literacy to dramatic play, best practices, and immediately applicable information and resources for use in working with DLL children and families.

Family engagement strategies that were shared during the trainings included inviting families into the classroom to share cultural items such as books, stories, or songs. 44% of participants described sharing, encouraging, and connecting with families as practices they would implement.

The DLL Infant/Toddler PD Modules (2 modules, each offered in English and Spanish) incorporated social-emotional and language acquisition strategies for use among ECE professionals working with DLL infants and toddlers.

Across both modules (“Using a Social-Emotional Lens to Support Infant and Toddler Dual Language Learners” and “Supporting Language Acquisition for Infant and Toddler Dual Language Learners”), 96% of participants reported that their understanding of the benefits of bilingualism had increased. All participants in the Language Acquisition training agreed that their understanding of how to support culture and diversity in their programs had increased, as had their confidence that they could implement the content or strategies presented in the training.

Takeaway:

Providers who attended the DLL Infant/Toddler Language Acquisition training module gained a better understanding of how to support culture and diversity in their programs, and they were confident that they could implement the strategies presented.

The DLL Joint PD Module (offered in English) promoted alignment of DLL teaching best practices, and opportunities for sharing strategies and content, across the preschool, transitional kindergarten (TK), and kindergarten pathways.

Participants learned about family engagement and classroom strategies for building DLL language skills, including story reading, sorting and patterning, and songs and music that could be applicable for those working with children from Pre-K through K, to provide continuity of DLL services. After the training, 60% of participants identified dialogic reading (CROWD) as the strategy they would be most likely to implement in their programs or classrooms to support young DLLs.

Across these three PD Modules, survey responses showed:

87%-96%

of participants increased their understanding of the benefits of bilingualism

88%-96%

found the trainings to be professionally valuable

88%-96%

planned to share their new knowledge with others

“ [I learned that] literacy is more than just books. We can include music, storytelling, bonds between family members and school family. ”

- Participant, DLL Professional Development Modules

Overall, 22% of DLL PD participants identified potential challenges to implementing DLL strategies and practices learned throughout the PD modules. These included:

- making time in their days for new language strategies
- including time for organizing activities and to process, plan, and practice
- potential challenges from administrators who had not participated in the modules
- potential difficulties in working with parents to share the benefits of bilingualism.

The DLL Initiative hopes to help ECE providers address these challenges by continuing to share information on Dual Language Learning best practices with directors, administrators, and families, and by encouraging ECE professionals at all levels to support DLL efforts.

“ In order for me to get to know my student’s family, I need to honor the home culture and support their home language. ”

- Participant, DLL Professional Development Modules





In addition to providing traditional trainings, QSLA offered opportunities for ECE providers and coaches to participate in Communities of Practice (CoPs).

In Communities of Practice, learning occurs when a group of people who share a passion for an activity or topic come together regularly to interact⁹, discuss their practice and their goals, and develop a set of shared resources, ideas, knowledge, and experience. Two types of CoPs were offered by the DLL Initiative: one specifically for ECE coaches who work to support teachers of DLLs in providing high-quality early education and services, and one for ECE providers (both center-based and family child care) working at the site or classroom level. The CoP sessions were offered in English and Spanish.

Communities of Practice for ECE providers and coaches conveyed DLL content and strategies in a collaborative, participatory environment, which allowed participants to build bonds, share and learn from one another, and add to their networks.

40 participants attended one or more of the 9 CoP sessions (available in English and Spanish) for ECE providers; participants were 33% center-based teachers, 28% FCC providers, and 32% administrators/supervisors. Provider participants reported learning about specific strategies and content, and increasing their general understanding. The benefits they mentioned included:

- learning useful DLL strategies and content
- feeling validated in their own bilingualism or in existing classroom support for DLLs
- increased understanding of the benefits of bilingualism
- ability to share their new knowledge with others.

“ I gained a lot of information on how to create an environment that supports the children’s home language by adding labels to enhance print but not to overwhelm. ”

-Participant, Provider Communities of Practice

80 participants attended one or more of the 10 CoP sessions for ECE coaches. Participants gained many useful takeaways from these sessions, including DLL activities, practices, and research-based information. The benefits they mentioned included:

- learning how to incorporate DRDP practices through a DLL lens
- understanding the importance of finding mentors, speaking in more than one language, and listening to children more intently
- gaining information on the four stages of second language acquisition and outcomes of early reading development
- increased understanding of coaches’ roles as advocates for DLL teachers and families.

Takeaway:

Providers who attended the Communities of Practice learned useful DLL strategies and content and felt validated in their support for DLLs; they also increased their understanding of the benefits of bilingualism and were able to share this knowledge with others.

The Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions, offered in English in 2021-22, aligned with the content in the DLL PD Modules, to make sure that interested trainers (including directors, coaches and other early learning professionals) received the same information and resources about the benefits of bilingualism, to help them easily share the DLL PD Modules with others in their networks or programs.

28 participants attended one or more of the modules, 86% of whom were trainers or coaches. 71% worked primarily with ECE professionals.



of respondents were confident that they could implement the content or strategies presented in the ToT series.

- Overall, most respondents indicated that when offering these trainings within their own programs or communities, they planned to include strategies for family interaction and building family connections through cultural activities. About a third of respondents also planned to incorporate classroom-based DLL strategies and ways to build children's confidence into their trainings.

Takeaway:

Providers who attended the Training of Trainers series planned to enhance their future trainings with the new strategies they learned for building family connections through cultural activities, supporting DLLs in the classroom, and increasing children's confidence.

In addition to the multiple trainings and workshops that were offered to early educators, the DLL Initiative created a collection of DLL-specific resources that can be accessed online, including tip sheets, strategies, toolkits, and information in Spanish and Chinese.





DLL Family Workshops

DLL children come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and these family contexts should be valued as sources of linguistic, cultural, and social-emotional learning. By building connections between home and school, early educators can help children build strong foundations for success in school and beyond.¹⁰ QSLA's DLL Initiative partners designed a 3-part workshop series, available in English, Spanish, Mandarin, and Cantonese, to be attended by families and caregivers of Dual Language Learners. All participants received up to 5 books in both English and the language of the workshop they attended.

The QSLA Family Workshops emphasized the importance of bilingualism and multilingualism, and shared how families can support their children's home language development. Across all Family Workshops, there were 189 unduplicated participants (148 with intake forms), most of whom had children under 6 years of age at home.

Some participants in the family workshops were also providers (e.g., early educators with DLL children of their own or interested child care providers). Strategies and information from the family workshops will be useful to providers as they support the DLL children and families in their programs. Participants shared that they planned to:

- use newly learned language strategies with DLL children
- practice speaking to their children in the home language (including reading and singing)
- share DLL information with other families

“ Understanding the value of a child's language, culture, and traditions will be helpful with my interactions with the children and parents. ”

- Participant, DLL Professional Development Modules

Across all Family Workshops, survey responses showed:

94%

of participants increased their understanding of the benefits of bilingualism

95%

reported that the workshops were relevant to their life experiences.

An additional “Read Together” event, offered bilingually in English and Mandarin, was targeted to ECE providers, with a focus on support for DLL families and bilingual literacy. Each adult was mailed a copy of the book presented at the event to add to their home library.

“ Whether parents or teachers, everyone must speak up for the rights of children. ”

- Participant, Mandarin/ Cantonese Family Workshop

Communication and Outreach

The QSLA Communications workgroup created a central hub for all DLL Initiative communications. Between August 2021 and June 2022, QSLA reached out to the community as part of its work to support DLLs throughout Los Angeles County. This outreach had three components:

Aligned social media and email communications. QSLA Communications developed and shared DLL events and information through existing and trusted social media networks (including QSLA, LACOE, First 5 LA, and LA County R&Rs); through a centralized website (QSLA); through monthly email newsletters; and through email distribution lists, so families, early educators and community partners would be aware of upcoming provider and family workshop events and new resources. For providers, using multiple communications methods and employing trusted sources to spread the word are valuable strategies for communicating with families about a program's DLL approach.

Providing bilingual and multilingual books to support families. Partner organizations who supported the DLL Initiative with book distribution included Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Crystal Stairs, and LA Care. Events were held at community centers or ECE sites with fun, festive atmospheres for the giveaways. In all, 5,126 books were distributed to 4,731 families, including at least 4,817 children between birth and 6 years old. Books were also given to participants at family workshop events.



Watch
the
video

A televised advertising spot designed to promote awareness of the benefits of bilingualism. The 30-second video aired in English and Spanish, on Spectrum television channels, in Los Angeles-area zip codes that contained a higher proportion of subscribers who speak a second language and of subscribers with young children. In total, 240,420 families were reached by the advertising spot; 44% of impressions were viewed in Spanish, and 97% of all viewers watched the spot to completion.

The QSLA DLL Initiative Moving Forward

The collaborative partners of the QSLA DLL Initiative share an ongoing commitment to ensuring the success of Los Angeles County's Dual Language Learners. In the coming years, work on the QSLA DLL Initiative will include the following priorities:

Transforming "live" virtual trainings for early educators into self-paced trainings, to improve accessibility for early educators, and acquiring funding for the development of self-paced trainings in Chinese, to expand the reach of these modules.

Emphasizing the importance of bilingualism and multilingualism in messaging to families and educators, and including DLL services and accessibility as priorities in the ongoing work of QSLA.

Improving communications strategies in order to reach a broader group of ECE providers, including designating funding for translation, widespread sharing of informational materials (including invitations to trainings), and outreach that focuses specifically on FCC providers.



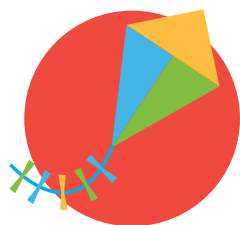
Endnotes

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For more information on our DLL resources, scan the QR code:



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