

# QSLA's DLL Initiative

FOUNDATIONS OF A NETWORK SERVING EARLY EDUCATORS AND FAMILIES OF DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS



## 2021-22 Stakeholder 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 Stakeholder Community in consideration toward improving DLL opportunities, communication, resources, and services for early educators and families. The brief also identifies funding and commitments that will be needed to continue this work effectively and comprehensively to ensure the success of Los Angeles County's Dual Language Learners.

### 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 adulthood<sup>2</sup> and perform better on problem-solving tasks requiring attention and executive control.<sup>3</sup> They may also demonstrate advantages in social-emotional competence.<sup>4</sup> Bilingualism benefits children in many ways!

**Around 60% of children from zero to 5 years old in California are DLLs.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>**



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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup>

## 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 across 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, directors, teachers, 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 QSLA DLL Initiative's design and implementation of professional development modules, communities of practice, family workshops, book distribution, and advertising spots directly or indirectly 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. This content will continue to be used by trainers and will be available to new cohorts of participants over the years to come, increasing the impact of the DLL Initiative even further.

Outcomes data showed that participants increased their understanding of the benefits of bilingualism/multilingualism, learned theories and processes of language acquisition, and discovered new strategies to engage Dual Language Learners and their families.

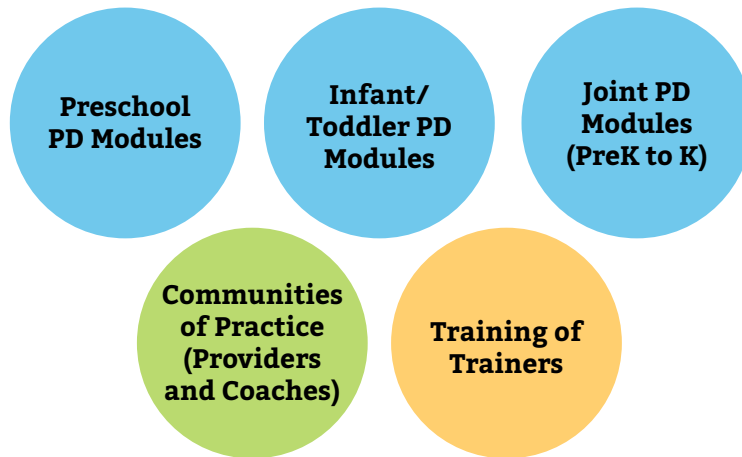
The Initiative served providers working at child care centers and Family Child Care (FCC) homes. The Initiative used targeted outreach, as well as partnerships with LA County Resource and Referral agencies and Family Child Care Home Education Networks agencies, to contact providers at FCCs, who often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



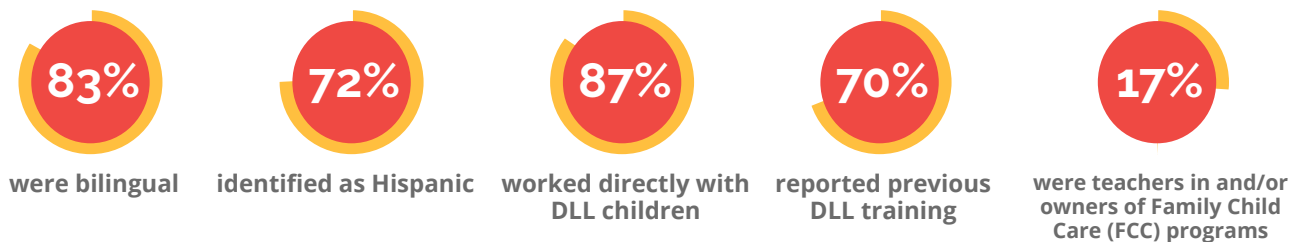


## Professional Development (PD) for ECE Professionals

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 language development, 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 Infant/Toddler, Preschool, and Joint PD Modules were separate series of multiple one- to two-hour trainings (“modules”). Each module included informational slides and discussion opportunities, and was presented by a professional trainer. 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.

**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 continuum.**

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

“ 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 interact,<sup>9</sup> 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; 33% were 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 think they should include [DLL] in the teacher education programs.... The CoP changed me a lot and helped me to lose my fear of speaking Spanish in the classroom. ”

-Participant, Provider Communities of Practice

“ I appreciated the CoP was in Spanish, the presenters were very helpful. It was more easily understood for me. And it makes me realize that my children would appreciate hearing lessons in their own language. ”

-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 activities and practices for supporting DLLs, 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.

“ I learned that families need more advocates like us coaches to deliver the information to FCC providers and Childcare Center Teachers. ”

-Participant, Provider Communities of Practice



**The Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions, offered in English, 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.

## **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 early learning programs, early educators can help children to build strong foundations for success in school and beyond.<sup>10</sup>

In order to support families' understanding of the benefits of raising Dual Language Learners, and to clarify mixed messaging from previous education laws and biases, QSLA partners designed a series of three Family Engagement Workshops, available in English, Spanish, Mandarin, and Cantonese, to be attended by families and caregivers of Dual Language Learners.



### **Family Workshop Topics:**

**Our Home Language Is Important:** Myths and Facts about Bilingualism

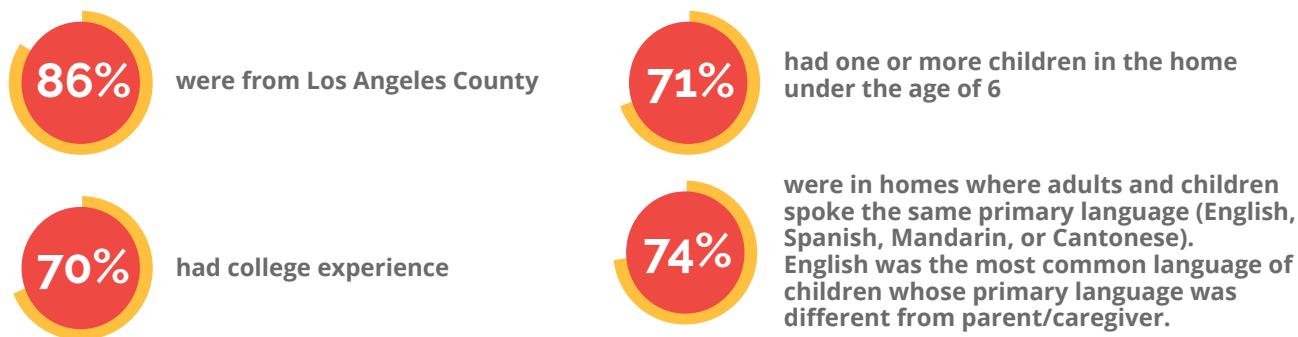
**Maintaining our Home Language:** Best Practices to Support Young Dual Language Learners at Home

**Advocating for Our Young Dual Language Learners:** Partnering with Teachers to Support Children's Dual Language Learning Development



Targeted communications efforts and partnerships were key elements in reaching local families. The organizers connected with staff at QSLA sites, First 5 LA, Best Start LA, and LA Babies Best home visiting programs to share information about the DLL Family Workshops, and to form partnerships where the program officers, leaders, and home visitors could share workshop information and encourage families in their networks to attend. The QSLA partners also shared monthly social media graphics and messaging through their networks, and shared workshop flyers and graphics with LA County's seven Resource and Referral Agencies (R&Rs), enabling them to conduct outreach to families in their service areas.

A total of 189 unduplicated participants (148 with intake forms) attended the DLL Family Workshops; many participants attended workshops in more than one language or attended multiple workshops in the series, but each participant was only counted once, regardless of how many sessions they attended, for the purposes of this report.



Many participants in the family workshops may also have been early educators who had DLL children of their own, or who were interested in learning more about supporting the DLLs in their care. The strategies and information provided in the family workshops are useful to this group of participants both as they work with their own children at home, and as they support the DLL children and families in their programs. For example, one participant in the English Family Workshop wrote, "Understanding the value of a child's language, culture, and traditions will be helpful with my interactions with the children and parents."

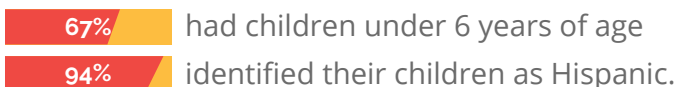
The higher-than-expected participation rates within the Cantonese and Mandarin series were particularly exciting. In the past, local DLL offerings in Cantonese and Mandarin have been very limited, and participants demonstrated a high level of interest in these trainings. One participant in the Cantonese and Mandarin workshops wrote that they wanted to "hold a few more events to get more families to join in on the importance of bilingualism!"

**QSLA Family Workshops strengthened family engagement and parent advocacy strategies to support DLLs at school and at home. They also emphasized the importance of home language and shared tips for supporting children’s home language development.**

Families’ feedback helped inform the workshop topics. For example, in the first round of workshops provided, many families indicated an interest in learning more about dual immersion programs so they would be more aware of the options available when their children entered the TK-12 system. To address this interest, the developers adapted one of the workshops for the second round of the series to include more information about dual immersion programs. Participants’ feedback demonstrated that they appreciated the topics and information covered in all workshops. All participants received up to 5 books in both English and the language of the workshop they attended to better support their young Dual Language Learners at home.

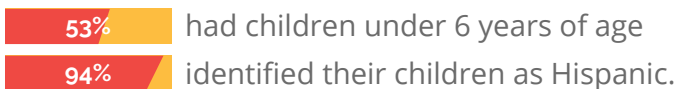
**Family Workshops (English):**

47 participants attended one or more workshops in the series.



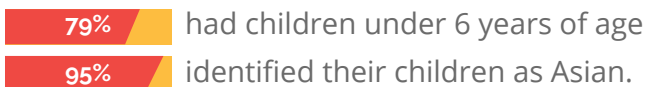
**Family Workshops (Spanish):**

41 participants attended one or more workshops in the series.

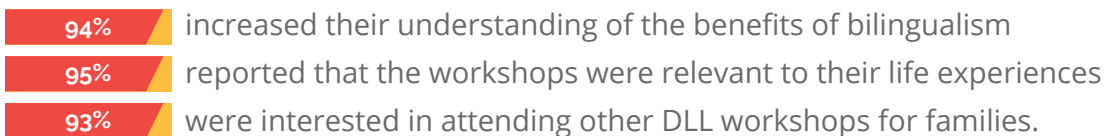


**Family Workshops (Mandarin/Cantonese):**

101 participants attended one or more workshops in the series.



**Across all Family Workshops, participants’ feedback survey responses showed:**



“ [I learned that] bilingualism will not slow down the child’s language. ”

-Participant, Family Workshop Series: Mandarin/Cantonese





**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. Over 80% of participants said they learned new ways to support their child’s early reading skills and creativity through these events.**

By providing useful information on bilingualism and multilingualism, and by highlighting the importance of reading and speaking in a home language, the workshops offered by the QSLA DLL Initiative increased families’ ability to support their DLL children. Participants in the family workshops learned how to advocate for their children, and felt that the workshops were relevant to their life experiences.

### **ECE Stakeholder Community Call To Action**

**Expand access to professional development for early educators who work with DLLs and their families. Organizations providing professional development related to work with DLLs should prioritize innovative delivery and outreach solutions to invite the participation of underserved populations.** Creating new communication strategies, connecting with community partners, and developing training materials in additional languages will enable organizations to connect with more diverse types of ECE providers, including those who work at FCCs or home-based child care facilities.

Increase the cultural relevancy and accessibility of instructional opportunities by working with families and educators to learn about their language, culture, beliefs, and goals.<sup>11</sup> Piloting workshops with several members of a language community before offering them to a larger group, as was done in the case of the DLL Initiative’s Family Workshops, creates opportunities for feedback and targeted development.

Ensure that practices for increased accessibility, including interpretation, translation, and community outreach, are embedded in budgets for the creation of trainings and workshops. Expand professional development offerings to include currently underrepresented languages, and hire trainers who are able to provide support to early educators and families in their home languages.

- Trainings and information should be created specifically for providers and families who speak home languages other than English and Spanish (e.g., Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Vietnamese). Additional funds for translation into languages other than Spanish are essential, as well as funding for bilingual trainers that speak other languages.
- Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers, as well as Home-Based Child Cares (HBCCs), require outreach beyond the typical distribution lists and networks. Outreach should include increased connection with social networks, such as community organizations, neighborhood liaisons, and groups of native speakers.

## Communication and Outreach

The QSLA Communications workgroup created a central hub for all DLL Initiative communications. Between August 2021 and June 2022, the Communications workgroup 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.

**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 and families, including designating funding for translation, widespread sharing of informational materials (including invitations to trainings), more family workshops, and outreach that focuses specifically on FCC providers.

Expanding the DLL Initiative's commitment and support to providers and families in Family Child Care and home-based settings, including building partnerships with additional ECE leaders and organizations to continue and expand QSLA's DLL services.



## ECE Stakeholder Community Call to Action

**Organizations that support early educators and the ECE workforce should network, collaborate, and communicate, in order to increase structural commitment to DLLs across Los Angeles County and beyond.** Building regional collaborations requires time, funding, and extensive thought. Rather than creating additional infrastructure for each new effort, it is preferable to strengthen existing foundations, like those created over the past year by the QSLA DLL Initiative.

A major step toward collaboration would be the development of a shared online repository, where early educators and families could easily locate a variety of resources from organizations across the region. Many individual organizations already have resources to share that would contribute to support for DLLs in ECE, including informational links, family toolkits, training materials, tip sheets, or similar assets.

Connect and coordinate with local partners and QSLA members (including organizations offering professional development and workforce supports) to improve diverse provider types' access to and general awareness of DLL resources, trainings, family workshops, and events. Through clear and consistent messaging, local ECE organizations such as Resource and Referral Agencies should be provided with information about and access to all DLL trainings.

The QSLA DLL Initiative invites the collaboration of additional thought partners, experts, and stakeholders. For example, organizations that work with FFN providers or HBCCs might be able to help the Initiative contact these providers and include them in future trainings; home visiting organizations have access to families of young Dual Language Learners who would benefit from early information about the importance of bilingualism; and organizations that provide coaching or training could partner with the Initiative to conduct more training-of-trainers sessions, increasing the availability of knowledgeable trainers who can support DLL families and providers.

### Additional Resources

In addition to the multiple trainings and workshops that were offered to early educators and families, the DLL Initiative created a collection of DLL-specific resources that can be accessed online, including one-page tip sheets, strategies, toolkits, instructive videos, parent perspective videos, and more. Visit the QSLA website at <https://qualitystartla.org/resources> to view resources and information for families, early educators, and other members of the ECE community, provided in English, Spanish, and Chinese.

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

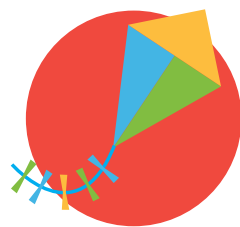


**For more information on our DLL resources, scan the QR code:**



## Endnotes

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