

MAINE DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

Dual Language Learners, PreK, and Early Childhood

Multilingual Learners in Early Childhood Education

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Resource developed by Rebecca Carey, Multilingual Learner Teacher Leader Fellow, 2024-2025



Presenter



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Goals for this session



- Technical Assistance
 - Identification and Service
- Overview of Strong Practices
 - Culturally Responsive Actions for Learning
 - Family Engagement
 - Language-Focused Classrooms
 - Essentials of Play and Joyful Learning



- ✓ Dual Language Learners are multilingual learners in early childhood.

Who are Dual Language Learners?

Dual language learners (DLLs) are

- Young children (generally 0-5 years old)
- Learning two or more languages

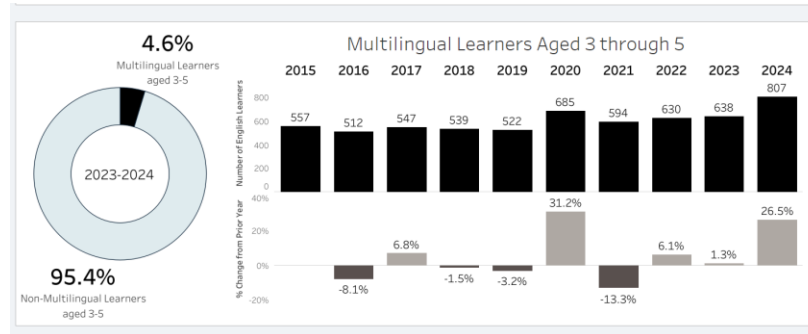
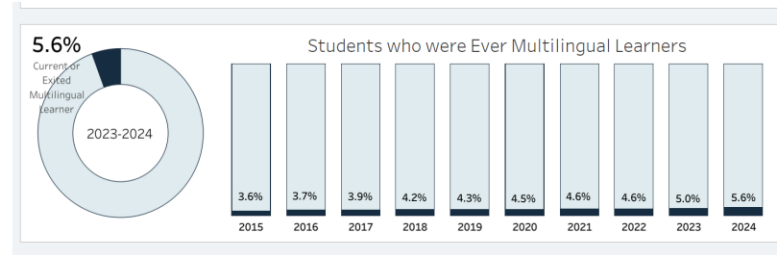
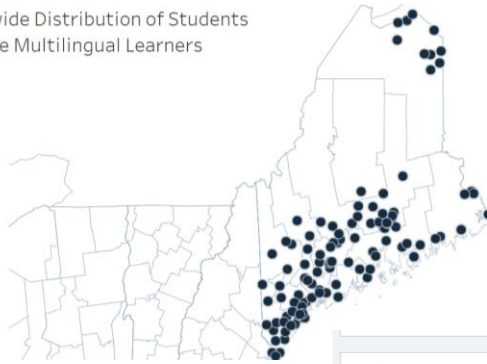
Children of this age are still developing in their primary language(s) while also learning one or more additional languages.

Growth and Change in Maine's Students who are Multilingual Learners.

- Greater number of schools and districts with MLs identified
- Greater number of students who are MLs
- Greater number of PreK MLs
- Change in students' experiences and needs

Source:
<https://www.maine.gov/doe/Multilinguallearnerdatadashboard>

Statewide Distribution of Students who are Multilingual Learners





Dual Language Learners (DLLs) in Maine

- In 2023-2024 in Maine multilingual learners (MLs) represented 4.6% of the total PreK population
- Number of ML PreK Students in 2024: 807
- Number of ML PreK Students in 2023: 638



**An increase
of 26.5% in
one year.**

Source: [Source: Maine DOE Multilingual Learner Dashboard](#)



Must schools screen and identify PreK MLs/DLLs?

YES

- [The Language Use Survey](#) must be completed by the parent/guardian/caregiver at the time of enrollment for all students.
- If a language other than, or in addition to, English is noted, then an English Language Proficiency (ELP) Screener must be administered to the student.
- The results of this ELP Screener will indicate if the student should be identified as a multilingual learner.



[Click here for a step-by-step guide to Registering and Enrolling New Students from Multilingual Families](#)

ELP Screening Tools for PreK and Preschool Students

Maine DOE recommends that schools use one of the following psychometrically designed English language proficiency screeners for students who have not entered kindergarten:

- **Pre-LAS: More information about Pre-LAS**
- **Pre-IPT Oral Test 3-5 (Ballard and Tighe)**



It is the SAU's fiscal responsibility to ensure that a screener is purchased and that training occurs to ensure accuracy in proper identification.

Collaborate with colleagues to research and identify which ELP screening tool for early childhood is the best fit for your setting.



Must schools develop an Individual Language Acquisition Plan for PreK MLs/DLLs?

YES

- **The steps for developing and implementing an educational program are the same for all identified ML students, regardless of age or grade level.**
- The student's parent/guardian/caregiver should be notified of the ML identification within 30 days of enrollment.
- A Language Acquisition Team should meet following a student ML identification. Include parents/guardians/caregivers.
- An Individual Language Acquisition Plan (ILAP) should be established for the student.

Trust

Communication

Promotes
families' dynamic
language and
cultural practices

Equity

**Creating a language-focused, asset-based
PreK or Early
Childhood Program in
collaboration with
multilingual families
and communities**

Essential Actions for PreK and Early Childhood Educators

- Examine your beliefs, actions and identities.
- Know and affirm the children you serve.
- Create sustaining relationships with the families based on respect and two-way communication.
- Reflect on your setting and work collaboratively to change bias and discrimination in your setting's resources, policies and practices.
- Create and sustain environments that invite, welcome, and promote multilingual children's language development, dynamic language and cultural practices, and learning.
- Provide curriculum and instruction that is developmentally appropriate and culturally, and linguistically sustaining.
- Use a variety of equitable tools, in different contexts and over time, to observe, document, and assess multilingual children's learning and development.

Promote and support multilingual children's language development, dynamic language and cultural practices, and learning



Language Focused Family Engagement



Continually ask families about their language goals, hopes, fears, and concerns for their child's learning.



Ask families how, and in which preferred language, they would like to receive information.



Co-create welcoming spaces for families to engage with each other around shared goals and concerns for their children's language and learning.



Ask families about a preferred time for check-ins, conversations and sharing everyday information. Offer options.

Language Focused Family Engagement



Share information in an accessible way, in the preferred language, and without jargon.



Create platforms to ensure multilingual families are included in all aspects of their child's education, including decision making.



Co-create welcoming spaces for families to engage with each other around shared goals and concerns for their children's language and learning.



Have regular, on-going, reciprocal conversations and sharings with families around language and learning, both at home and in school.

Child-Centered Approach: Know Your Students

- **From the time of enrollment**, gather information and create a student portrait, profile, or other framework that can be shared as a living **document** with the student's educational team
- Ask parents/guardians/caregivers about their child's family, linguistic, cultural, educational, and life experiences
- Ask about your student's and families' hopes, concerns, dreams, challenges
- As you spend time with the students and talking with families, note strengths and celebrations.
- Complete Language-Focused Observations frequently



The Essential Role of Play and Joyful Learning

“Just as children need human interaction to learn language, they need active engagement in rich, meaningful activities they can initiate and control.”

—Zoila Morell and Dena López,
“Translanguaging and Emergent Literacy in
Early Childhood Education”





Planning for Language-Focused Play

“Some may argue that play is an inappropriate means of achieving standards. I have found that children can meet and exceed standards through playful learning that combines open-ended experiences, child-directed initiatives, and teacher-guided activities.”

—Patricia McDonald, “Observing, Planning, Guiding: How an Intentional Teacher Meets Standards Through Play”

- **How do I plan for play opportunities that are linguistically rich and allow for students to use all of their “languaging” skills?**
- **How do I model language and make language visible in support of new language learning through play?**
- **How do I incorporate language focused observations?**

Play: Equity in Action

“Play must be the right of every child. Not a privilege. After all, when regarded as a privilege, it is granted to some and denied to others, creating further inequities. Play as a right is what is fair and just.”

—Mariana Soto-Manning, “Is play a privilege or a right? And what’s our responsibility? On the role of play for equity in early childhood education.”

- **How do I plan for diverse types of play?**
- **How do I learn about and incorporate culturally responsive and linguistically dynamic play for learning?**
- **How do I create space for students and families to participate in and initiate play?**
- **How do I ensure play environments feel safe and welcoming for all children?**



Language-Focused and Child-Centered Play is:



...responsive to children's interests and their cultural and linguistic practices.



...an opportunity to promote multiliteracies and multimodal learning.



...problem solving and collaborative.



...a joyful integration of content and language.



...an opportunity for authentic language interactions between children.



...a space where children feel comfortable to try out and practice their English.

Resources & Opportunities



Resources

- [Maine DOE Multilingual Learner Identification and Placement Guidance Document 2024-25](#)
- [WIDA Bulletin: Language Focused Family Engagement](#)
- [Unlocking Multilingual Learners' Potential: Strategies for Making Content Accessible](#)
- [WIDA Can Do Descriptors Early Years](#)
- [What I Know About My EL Fillable/Printable from SupportEd](#)

Opportunities

- [WIDA Self-Paced Workshop: Exploring the WIDA PreK-3 Essential Actions](#)
- [WIDA Self-paced Workshop: Let's Play! Multilingual Children's Joyful Learning in PreK-3](#)
- [Webinar from SupportEd: Importance of Peer Learning and Oral Language Development for MLs](#)