



**LEARNING FROM LATINX *FAMILIAS*:**

## Policy Considerations to Better Support Multilingual Learners During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed existing inequities in the educational access and opportunity to learn of emergent multilingual learners or English learner (EL) students, as the U.S. Department of Education labels them, who represent approximately 10% of the nation's K-12 population and are the fastest-growing official subgroup of students (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

These inequities originate from a number of factors, such as limited access to resources (including technological resources) and opportunities for families to participate in school events and engage with school staff in their home languages.

By law, EL students must be provided with specialized instruction that draws on their linguistic and cultural capital and facilitates access to grade-level content while they develop their English language proficiency (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020; Castañeda v. Pickard, 1981). Since the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, responsibility for the education of EL students has shifted from federal to state educational agencies (SEAs), and, as such, SEAs have a unique opportunity to shape EL policy and practice and address prevailing inequities that have been heightened by the pandemic. In doing so, it is imperative that states take an asset-based approach to EL policy and practice that acknowledges that EL students and families have enormous linguistic, intellectual, and cultural wealth to contribute to U.S. identity, growth, and well-being (Callahan & Gándara, 2014).

While the literature has identified persistent gaps in educators' understandings of how to partner effectively with diverse families and build on family and community-based expertise to support ELs' school-based education (McLeman, Fernandes, and McNulty,

2012), the pandemic has provided some opportunities for strengthening connections between school and home. With school going virtual at the onset of the pandemic (which has to some degree continued in many school districts around the country in the 2020-2021 academic year), families have been asked to take on new roles to support their children's school-based education, and schools and districts have been expected to provide the resources and supports needed to be able to carry them out. As such, schools and districts have an opportunity to rethink mainstream views of parent involvement, particularly EL parent involvement, and to engage families as strategic partners in their children's education.

Through their ties with community-based organizations, families can serve as bridges between schools and the community at large and can help establish connections between the two in supporting the education of EL students. The [Padres Comprometidos Ed-Tech](#) program, which was developed by UnidosUS as part of their family engagement portfolio in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, is an example of how members of community organizations that serve EL students in after-school programs can work with Latino parents who desire greater participation in their children's education by supporting their understanding of the school system's rapid shift to distance learning.

In an attempt to learn from those with the most at stake when it comes to their children's education and elevate their perspectives and voices, UnidosUS and the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) collaborated to document the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students and their families, in particular EL students (UnidosUS) and students with disabilities (NCLD). This brief will focus on the families of EL students and the work carried out by UnidosUS in partnership with the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL).

## STUDY

In the spring of 2021, UnidosUS and CAL conducted a focus group to explore the lived experiences of Latino families and educators during the COVID-19 pandemic with an emphasis on the impact on EL students' learning and their families' well-being. The main objective was to create an environment supportive of participants' experiences and perspectives as well as to cultivate conversations that would be natural and fluid, serving to:

1. Elevate the voices of parents who are not usually part of the conversation on the education of EL students alongside educators' experiences.
2. Identify inequities faced by EL students and their parents that may have been exacerbated due to the pandemic.
3. Identify opportunities and bright spots from the past year for asset-based policy and practice recommendations as a way of reframing "learning loss."
4. Support states, districts, and schools to establish policies and practices to effectively identify, instruct, and assess EL students.

The findings and recommendations we present in this brief are not meant to be conclusive, but rather suggestive. We do not claim that what we are reporting is generalizable to all EL parents and teachers, especially given the limited scope and number of our focus groups. However, there are important lessons to learn in how

we might better support EL families and teachers as partners in the education of EL students. We view these lessons as being relevant for states, districts, schools, and communities at large.

## METHODOLOGY

Before presenting the findings, we briefly outline the design and methodology used in the study.

### Sample

The study population was drawn from four UnidosUS Affiliates Network sites across three different regions (i.e., the California, Midwest, and Southeast regions; for a complete list of Affiliates see <https://www.unidosus.org/affiliates/>). Recruitment of EL parents and teachers was conducted by staff at the four sites following a set of criteria set forth by study researchers. Parents and teachers were invited to participate in the study if they had one or more students in grades 2-5 classified as EL. While some students classified as EL in Kindergarten continue to be classified as EL in secondary school, many are reclassified in elementary school and the majority before Grade 8. As such, the focus was on the elementary school level, where EL students are found in larger numbers. We intentionally avoided the early grades because we wanted to compare participants' experiences during and before the pandemic to try to identify any differences that may be attributed to the current situation.

All parents were Latino and Spanish-speaking with strong ties to countries of origin (Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia, Honduras), and their children were attending one of two types of programs: dual language bilingual or mainstream English instruction only. Half of the teachers taught in a dual language bilingual program and were Spanish/English bilinguals and the other half taught in a mainstream program and were native English speakers (but one of them also spoke Spanish). All teachers had more than 10 years of experience in the classroom and were certified to teach ESL but were currently serving as classroom teachers rather than ESL specialists.

*Table 1. Study Sample*

REGION	UNIDOS US AFFILIATE	PARENTS	TEACHERS	EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM
Southeast	Hispanic Services Council (Tampa, FL)	2	2	Mainstream
California	El Sol Science and Arts Academy (Santa Ana, CA)	3	2	Dual Language Bilingual
	Para los Niños (Los Angeles, CA)	3		Mainstream
Midwest	Gads Hill Center (Chicago, IL)	2		Dual Language Bilingual



## STUDY DESIGN

The study design included four groups of parents from four UnidosUS Affiliates Network sites across three different regions (California, Midwest, and Southeast regions) and two groups of teachers from two of these three regions (California and Southeast). Table 1 shows the six focus groups by the number of persons in each group, the region, the UnidosUS Affiliate, and the educational program type the EL students attended. The groups were very small, ranging from 2-3 participants with 14 participants in total (10 parents and four teachers) across the four groups.

With a small, convenient sample, the study strived for depth rather than breadth of information by collecting a significant amount of data from each participant. Moreover, the fact that all four sites participated in the *Padres Comprometidos* Ed-Tech program (developed to support Latino parents' understanding of the school system's rapid shift to distance learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic) allowed us to contextualize the study findings.

### Structure and Format of Focus Groups

The focus groups were held virtually through Zoom between March 17 and May 26, 2021, and by design included separate groups for parents and teachers. Three research team members participated in each of the focus groups. One member took the lead in facilitating the discussion while a second person primarily asked clarifying questions, as needed. The third team member provided additional support, also as needed. The lead researcher, a native Spanish-speaker fluent in English, facilitated the parent focus groups in Spanish and the teacher focus groups in English, with Spanish used occasionally by the bilingual dual language teachers. All focus group sessions were video-recorded and lasted 120 minutes on average.

Prior to conducting the focus groups, a Parent Focus Group Protocol and a Teacher Focus Group Protocol were developed. They included the same topics, but the questions were tailored to the particular participants. Moreover, the Parent Focus Group Protocol was developed in Spanish while the Teacher Focus Group Protocol used English.

**Both protocols have six components:**

1. Brief welcome and self-introductions, reminder of the project's goals and human subjects' issues.
2. Open-ended questions about the effect of the pandemic on participants' socioemotional well-being.
3. Multiple-choice questions about participants' experience with technology and other resources needed to carry out schoolwork.
4. Multiple-choice questions about instruction (e.g., mode of delivery, amount, quality, synchronous and asynchronous, etc.).
5. Open-ended questions about assessment (content and English language proficiency, formative and summative).
6. A mix of multiple-choice and open-ended questions about support received from the school, district, and community at large.

The sections with multiple-choice questions included clarifying questions as needed. Participants' answers were recorded in the Word document and were used to complement the information obtained through the multiple-choice questions, in an attempt to capture any potential differences that may have been attributed to the pandemic. As appropriate, questions were designed to elicit answers about a specific topic and any potential differences that may be attributed to the pandemic by formulating the same question within one of the following three different frameworks: 1) before the pandemic; 2) during the first few months of the pandemic; and 3) in the present.

Focus groups were conducted as semi-structured interviews facilitated using protocols with a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended questions (see Appendix for a copy of the parent and teacher focus group protocols). The multiple-choice questions were presented in the form of Zoom polls taken by participants and their responses obtained through the Zoom platform. Participants took turns answering the open-ended questions and the focus group facilitator recorded the answers in a Word document. Recordings of the sessions were used as needed to fill in any existing gaps in the data.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis included a systematic study of the researcher notes, videos, and information gathered via the polls for all six focus groups to identify salient issues and themes. Participants' responses around their socioemotional well-being were examined as a way of anchoring their mindset.

**Results**

This section summarizes the focus group study findings. The findings presented in this brief are organized in four sections: 1) socioemotional well-being; 2) learning environment and technology; 3) instruction and assessment, and 4) support from school, district, community.



### *Socioemotional Well-Being*

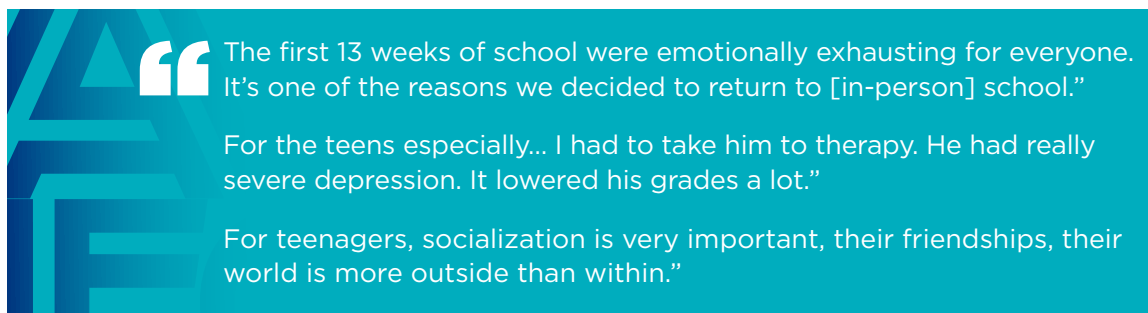
While many families across the country experienced stresses related to health concerns, widespread job losses, and difficulties associated with schooling children at home, the families in our sample, like many other Latino families in the country, were disproportionately affected by job losses and economic hardship. Given that Latinos are concentrated in low-wage jobs and that more than 75% of all low-wage jobs are in occupations that were greatly affected by the pandemic (e.g., retail sales workers, cooks and food preparation workers, and child care workers), it is not surprising that all of the families interviewed had experienced job loss (Ross & Bateman 2019; UnidosUS, 2020). In fact, polling shows that 60-65% of Latino households lost wages or work due to COVID-19 and about a third of Latinos reported having had trouble paying bills and receiving help from a food bank since the start of the coronavirus outbreak (Pew Research Center, 2021; Pew Research Center, 2020; UnidosUS, 2020).

The families in our sample reported financial challenges during the pandemic, including trouble affording food, housing, and medical services. In some instances, they found themselves having to make the hard decision to leave their jobs so that they could stay home with their children and help them with virtual learning. “My children are my focus and their education my priority” was a common theme across parent focus groups. At the same time, Latino and immigrant workers are overrepresented in essential jobs, representing 54% of agricultural workers, 35% of meat processing workers, and 29% of medical assistants, putting them at high risk of exposure to COVID-19 (UnidosUS, 2020).

The majority of the parents in the focus groups shared concern about themselves or a family member contracting COVID-19, and as discussed later, it greatly influenced their decision to not send their children to school when schools reopened. Some of the parents interviewed and their immediate family members (including their children) had contracted the virus. This finding is again not surprising, given that in the first four months of the pandemic, Latinos made up 35% of all COVID-19 cases for which race/ethnicity data were available in July 2020, in comparison with 18.5% of the total U.S. population (UnidosUS, 2020). Additionally, more recent data show that half of Latinos in the United States say someone close to them has either been hospitalized or died from COVID-19 (Pew Research Center, 2021).



Many families in the focus groups reported their children having experienced high levels of stress from the amount of time spent on the computer to perform their schoolwork and the lack of social interaction with their peers. Parents described their children, particularly adolescent children, as being distracted, disengaged, and longing for social interaction. A recent study conducted to understand the financial and personal impact of the pandemic on Latinos found that young people in general have been a particular group of concern during the pandemic for mental health professionals (Pew Research Center, 2021).



Latino families also expressed having experienced legal challenges such as fear of deportation as well as language and cultural barriers that interfered with their ability to understand the information they were receiving from their children's school and school district. This was particularly true of schools that did not have a Spanish/English dual language bilingual program.

In spite of the aforementioned hardships experienced by the families in our sample, of note are the positive outlook, can-do attitude, and resourcefulness and resilience they had demonstrated in response to the coronavirus pandemic. As one participant put it, we have "dos opciones: adaptarse o adaptarse" (two options: adapting or adapting). All families were able to identify what they saw as opportunities presented by the pandemic, such as an increase in quality family time, the strengthening of family bonds, greater use of Spanish language in the home, socioemotional growth in their children, and empathy for them and their teachers as they learned to adapt to virtual learning.

The teachers in our sample spoke about the impact of the pandemic on their own socioemotional well-being and also that of their students. They described being overwhelmed at the beginning, on survival mode, and with no time for themselves, a situation that was particularly the case for those with school-age children at home. One teacher shared that she had been so focused on her students and her children (all of them of school-age) that she had failed to realize that she needed to give herself some of the advice that she had been giving them. Another teacher had come to the realization that the main focus of her instruction had to be on ensuring her students' socioemotional well-being and that learning content was secondary. She had had to change her approach to ensure that she reached all of her students where they were, not where she wanted them to be. Finally, while all teachers agreed that returning to in-person learning had been beneficial for students, some of them shared their fear of contracting COVID-19 during in-person instruction.


### *Learning Environment and Technology*

With schooling going virtual at the onset of the pandemic and to some degree continuing in many school districts around the country in the 2020-2021 academic year, internet access and technology became an absolute necessity for engaging in school activities. Like many families of color, the families in our sample did not have adequate access to the internet, enough devices for all of their family members, or quiet spaces with minimal distractions for all of their children to successfully complete their work virtually (Dorn, Hancock, Sarakatsannis, & Viruleg, 2020). In spite of that, when offered the choice between in-person and virtual schooling, the majority of the families in the sample chose virtual over in-person learning, citing fear of their children contracting the virus as the main reason for their choice.

Our findings are in line with those of a recent Pew Hispanic Research survey in which more than half of Latino parents with one or more school-age child living in their home reported that their child's instruction had been online-only during the 2020-2021 school year, in part due to parent's concerns about COVID-19 (Pew Research Center, 2021). Language barriers on the part of both students and their families and the demands of meeting basic family needs were also attributed by a U.S. Government Accountability Office report (2020) to poor participation in virtual learning at the onset of the pandemic.

All of the families in our sample reported that they eventually received needed access to devices and the internet from school or a community-based organization, but those whose children had gone back to school had had to return the devices they received, and the expectation was that those who had remained online would have to do the same when they returned to in-person learning.

On the bright side, families saw virtual learning as an opportunity to learn how to use new technology to help their children with schoolwork. Technology also allowed more families and their children to connect with family members and friends beyond schoolwork.



“My younger daughter has a lot of cousins in Mexico, and they play together on Zoom. I signed her up for an online Spanish course in Mexico.”

Although the teachers in our sample reported having adequate internet access and a device that they could use to conduct virtual instruction, they also reported having had trouble reaching some students and families, in particular, those lacking resources at home and not fluent in English. Moreover, as will be discussed in the next section, teachers had to learn to use new technology and adapt their instruction accordingly in a short period of time. A teacher who mentioned that technology was not easy for her shared that she empathized with some of her students for whom reading was not easy (“maybe that’s how they feel when they can’t read”). Another teacher stressed the importance of having patience and accepting that “we are not perfect and that’s hard for teachers.”

### *Instruction and Assessment*

Parents were well aware of the struggles of most teachers to teach virtually at the onset of the pandemic and their need for training. They were very sympathetic to their situation and expressed having seen considerable improvement in their ability to conduct instruction virtually between the last few months of the 2019-2020 school year and the 2020-2021 school year.

For the most part, the parents in our sample had been satisfied with the quality of instruction in their children's schools before the pandemic. They also expressed concern about the double impact on children's learning and grades of the reduction in the number of hours of synchronous instruction and the impossibility of reproducing in-person instruction in a virtual environment. Our findings here are once again in line with those of the recent survey conducted by the Pew Hispanic Research (Pew Research Center, 2021), in which they reported that most Latino parents worry their children have fallen behind in school as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.



Interestingly, when asked about their children's English language development during the pandemic, the parents interviewed did not seem as concerned about this as they were about their children's falling behind in content area learning. Parents for the most part did not have a good understanding of the type of ESL instruction their children received, who provided it (e.g., the classroom teacher or a specialist), or how (e.g., during whole-class instruction or in small groups outside of their regular classroom). One parent reported not having learned that her daughter had been classified as EL for over a year and when she found out, she was genuinely surprised, as she felt that her daughter was a fluent English speaker and much less fluent in Spanish (her heritage language). Similarly, while parents knew about content area assessments, the testing window, and in some cases even about accommodations afforded to EL students, they were not familiar with English language proficiency assessments.

Like parents, the teachers in our sample also shared their concerns about the loss of instructional time and the challenges with virtual instruction. Some teachers commented on the lack of adequate virtual tools. They cited students' suffering from burn-out due to overuse of some of the virtual tools and the need for new and more engaging tools. Teachers added that it was particularly challenging to do small group work in a virtual or hybrid environment with limited time for synchronous instruction, which research has shown is especially important for EL learners, as it provides an opportunity for more focused instruction tailored to their specific needs in a safer and less threatening environment. Teachers also reported that the use of manipulatives and other scaffolding strategies, which are critical to providing access to grade-level content for many EL students, was more challenging in a virtual environment than an in-person one (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2017).

As with any other educational tool, additional considerations are needed before adopting digital learning tools to be used with EL students. Among the most important considerations reported by districts in a pre-COVID-19 publication (U.S. Department of Education, 2019) were the lack of home access to technology, teachers' level of expertise in instructing EL students, their level of technology skills, and a general lack of knowledge of appropriate digital learning tools for EL students. Teachers, on the other hand, cited the time required to work with the tools, a lack of professional development on how to use specific tools, and the need for support during instructional time.

When asked about ESL instruction, teachers from dual language programs reported they had dedicated time for it before the pandemic, but that they integrated it with content area instruction given the instructional time cut due to the pandemic. Teachers in the mainstream program showed a lack of understanding about EL students' specific needs and shared that the support beginner and intermediate EL students were getting was provided by paraprofessionals, most of whom were bilingual, while advanced EL students were not being supported because "they speak English fine." As mentioned before, by law EL students must be provided with specialized instruction by an ESL-certified educator that draws on their linguistic and cultural capital and facilitates access to grade-level content while they develop their English language proficiency (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020; Castañeda v. Pickard, 1981).

Regarding assessments of students' progress during the pandemic, teachers shared that it had been challenging to get reliable data from online testing as they suspected that many students were getting help from family members. As some students returned

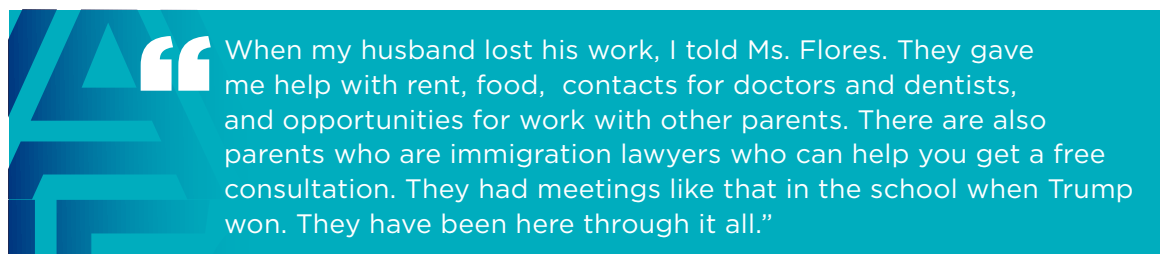
to the classroom, they had started to collect some data but were still in the process of trying to better understand the impact of the pandemic on their students' learning. One teacher was concerned that not having had summative assessments the year before had taken the value out of them for students and their families: "They don't see any urgency nor understand that a lot is at stake, especially for fifth grade." Like parents, teachers from both schools lacked information about English language proficiency assessments ("Last year is kind of fuzzy. I can't remember whether we administered it or not") and about their EL students' language development ("It's hard to know about their progress in English language development").

Finally, some of the teachers, in particular those working in the mainstream program, showed stereotypical views of Latino parents: "I'm not sure that many parents understand the importance of school." This misguided conception of EL families as disinterested in their children's education is unfortunately not that uncommon. For example, in interviews conducted with 37 teachers and assistant teachers in an elementary school, Souto-Manning and Swick (2006) found that most of the teachers attributed EL students' lower performance to the parents' lack of caring about their children's education. On the contrary, there is no evidence that parents of EL students are less likely than parents of non-EL students to understand the importance of education for their children's success in life (Goldenberg et al., 2001; Ji and Koblinsky, 2009; Noel et al., 2015; Sibley and Dearing, 2014; Tobin et al., 2013). As mentioned before, our findings support prior research in this area and provide evidence of the degree to which some of the families in our sample cared about their children's education, in that they made the hard decision to give up their jobs to help their children with schooling at home in spite of the economic hardships that that entailed.

### *Support from School, District, and Community*

The last section of the focus group protocol inquired about parents' level of satisfaction with the support they were getting from the school, district, and community, including local community-based organizations. Because some of the schools had strong ties to community-based organizations, such as the two schools in California, it was hard for parents to separate the two when answering the questions in this section. The same was true of the families in the Midwest whose children had been doing their virtual schooling at a community-based organization that had been offering after-school programs for students in the community before the pandemic and which opened its doors all day during the pandemic to provide space and resources, including paraeducators, for families that were unable to stay home with their children.

Parents were extremely satisfied and appreciative of the services of these school/community-based organizations in general and in particular for the additional support received during the pandemic. The services provided went above and beyond education to include food, rent, and health and legal assistance to name a few.



Similarly, the teachers in these schools attested to the services that families in need received from the schools/community-based organizations.

Parents with children in the schools that lacked the connection with a community-based organization were somewhat satisfied with the support they had received from their children's school, but they felt that schools could have done a better job at supporting them, in particular at the onset of the pandemic. Some of them reported not getting adequate resources or timely support for their children to be able to fully participate in virtual learning (e.g., one computer per household regardless of the number of students), or they reported that they had received a lot of information in English only. The teachers at one of these schools spoke of the instrumental role that the bilingual paraprofessionals and the social worker had played in reaching out to Latino parents and keeping them informed.



Our social worker is bilingual. She's very instrumental. I go to her if I need help with reaching a family. She doesn't give up and is very good about getting back to the teachers."

In general, families felt less supported by their school districts than their schools, which they felt had failed to provide the information in Spanish or the tools they needed to be able to support their children's schooling at home.



## CONSIDERATIONS

The findings in this brief are limited to this one study of six focus groups with 14 participants and 12 hours of discussion and recording. In offering considerations, we appreciate that our findings should not be overgeneralized. Nevertheless, we believe that the experiences of our focus group participants have implications for the kinds of actions that states and school districts might contemplate as they plan for the next school year. We hope that states, districts, and schools will embrace this moment in ways that create important and needed changes in practices and policies that will contribute to equitable access to learning for EL students, including digital tools and high-quality supports targeted to their strengths and to the challenges of learning in an additional language.

**Our findings encourage schools to:**

- Build on new models of collaborative, wraparound services to expand upon successful community-home-school initiatives. As schools plan for the 2021-2022 school year, it is important to remember that many EL families will still face some of the challenges they encountered in the past 18 months and will continue to rely on food distribution, mental health and legal services, and district-supported access to the internet and technology. Creating partnerships with community-based organizations that serve EL families will allow school districts to reach more families and better serve their needs.
- Engage EL families as strategic partners in their children's education. The pandemic has made it more apparent than ever the essential role that families play in the work of educating their children, as well as the need for stronger home-school connections. Approaching families from an asset-based perspective and welcoming and accommodating varying forms of family support and taking into consideration the talents and schedules of various family members leads to higher levels of family engagement (National Academies, 2017). Schools and school districts should establish an advisory structure for input from family and community members that capitalizes on their varied strengths, including their linguistic and cultural resources. Given the diversity of languages spoken by EL families, it is critical that school districts develop comprehensive language assistance plans to bridge language barriers with families and community members.
- In addition to language barriers, many EL families may be unfamiliar with the U.S. school system, and for that reason, it is critical that school districts create a responsive infrastructure for targeted two-way communication with students' families and the community. Of particular importance is the information about federal, state, and local education policies impacting their children. Districts and schools should hold orientation sessions for EL families on state standards, assessments, school expectations, and general program requirements for EL programs. The information must be in the top languages spoken by EL families and conveyed in a manner that is culturally relevant, easy to understand, and disseminated using technology familiar to EL families with access to 'live' support. Given the complexities of the identification and placement processes, the different types of services and programs available, monitoring processes, and assessment exit requirements, informational meetings must be arranged to provide families with the opportunity to ask questions about the written information sent home.
- Use data to assess EL students' learning needs and make decisions regarding instructional planning and professional development needs. It is imperative that students' socioemotional needs are assessed alongside their academic and language development needs, with adequate supports put in place. Providing students with opportunities to process and share their experiences over the past 18 months as they relate to the content of the lesson can not only provide valuable information for teachers but can also help students transition back to school. While diagnostic and summative assessment results can serve as important data sources, strategically designed and purposefully conducted formative assessments can enable teachers to better target their instruction while providing appropriate support and monitoring progress.

- Create district-wide research-based instructional plans that prioritize EL students' needs. EL learners benefit from grade-level standards-based instruction that is culturally responsive, acknowledges the interdependence of language and content, and recognizes the heterogeneity of the EL student population. Given that in addition to having access to grade-level content, EL students need to continue to develop their English language proficiency, it is critical that lesson planning, delivery, and materials include the supports needed to make the participation of all EL students possible. As such, dedicated time for English language development instruction, which may have been disrupted during the pandemic, is essential for sustaining the social interaction necessary for continued language acquisition and for building the academic language necessary to engage with grade-level content.
- English language development instruction should be targeted to the various proficiency levels of EL students in the four language modalities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and the instructional materials, including digital tools, must provide a variety of supports (visual, audio, text) to assist with language scaffolding (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The home languages of EL students can serve as great resources to support their content learning and build their metalinguistic awareness by comparing and contrasting linguistic features in their home languages and English. In order to be able to adequately serve the needs of EL students, it is critical for districts and schools to facilitate collaboration among the different educators that work with EL students (e.g., classroom teacher, ESL teacher, paraprofessional, special education teachers, etc.) and to ensure that they are served by ESL-certified educators with training in second-language acquisition and culturally responsive pedagogy.
- Provide EL educators with targeted long-term professional development that includes the use of instructional technology. All educators working with ELs need professional development and ongoing coaching to build capacity to support EL students' socioemotional, academic, and language development. EL educators can benefit from training on anti-racist, culturally responsive, and sustainable approaches to pedagogy that recognize the unique strengths of all students and acknowledge the importance of supporting students' language development while ensuring they have access to grade-level content. Moreover, educators can also benefit from guidance on the range of resources available, including digital tools, that are appropriate for EL students, as well as how to incorporate the use of these tools effectively in their instructional planning.

## REFERENCES

- Callahan, R. M., & Gándara, P. C., editors. 2014. *The Bilingual Advantage: Language, Literacy, and the U.S. Labor Market*. Clevedon, U.K.: Multilingual Matters.
- Castañeda v. Pickard, 648 F. 2d 989 (15th Cir., 1981).
- Council of the Great City Schools. 2020. *Addressing unfinished learning after COVID-19 school closures*. June 2020. [https://www.cgcs.org/CMS/LIB/DC00001581/CENTRICITY/DOMAIN/313/CGCS\\_UNFINISHED%20LEARNING.PDF](https://www.cgcs.org/CMS/LIB/DC00001581/CENTRICITY/DOMAIN/313/CGCS_UNFINISHED%20LEARNING.PDF).
- Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. J. 2017. *Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP Model* (5th ed). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Goldenberg, C., Gallimore, R., Reese, L., and Garnier, H. 2001. "Cause or Effect? A Longitudinal Study of Immigrant Latino Parents' Aspirations and Expectations, and Their Children's School Performance." *American Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 3: 547-582.



- Jan, T. & Clement, Scott. 2020. "Hispanics Are Almost Twice as Likely as Whites to Have Lost Their Jobs amid Pandemic, Poll Finds," *Washington Post*, May 6, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/05/06/layoffs-race-poll-coronavirus/>.
- Ji, C.S., and Koblinsky, S.A. 2009. "Parent Involvement in Children's Education: An Exploratory Study of Urban, Chinese Immigrant Families." *Urban Education* 44, no. 6: 687-709.
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2017. *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/24677>.
- National Academies Press. 2018. "Chapter 5: School-Family-Community: Contextual Influences on STEM Learning for English Learners." In *English Learners in STEM Subjects: Transforming Classrooms, Schools, and Lives*, 143-206. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25182>.
- Noel, A., Stark, P., and Redford, J. 2015. *Parent and Family Involvement in Education, from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2012: First Look*. NCES 2013-029-REV. February 2017. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013028rev.pdf>.
- McLeman, L., and Fernandes, A. (2012). "Unpacking Preservice Teachers' Beliefs: A Look at Language and Culture in the Context of the Mathematics Education of English Learners." *Journal of Mathematics Education* 5 (1): 121-135.
- Pew Research Center. 2020. *Coronavirus Economic Downturn Has Hit Latinos Especially Hard*. August 2005. [https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/08/PH\\_08.04.20\\_latino.economy.covid\\_Full.Report.pdf](https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/08/PH_08.04.20_latino.economy.covid_Full.Report.pdf).
- Ross, M., & Bateman, N. 2019. *Meet the Low Wage Workforce*. Brookings Institute. November 2017. [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/201911\\_Brookings-Metro\\_low-wage-workforce\\_Ross-Bateman.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/201911_Brookings-Metro_low-wage-workforce_Ross-Bateman.pdf).
- Sibley, E., and Dearing, E. 2014. "Family Educational Involvement and Child Achievement in Early Elementary School for American-Born and Immigrant Families." *Psychology in the Schools* 51 (8): 814-831.
- Souto-Manning, M., and Swick, K.J. 2006. "Teachers' Beliefs about Parent and Family Involvement: Rethinking Our Family Involvement Paradigm." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 34 (2): 187-193.
- Tobin, J., Adair, J.K., and Arzubaga, A. 2013. *Children Crossing Borders: Immigrant Parent and Teacher Perspectives on Preschool for Children of Immigrants*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- UnidosUS. 2020. *The Latino Community in the Time of Coronavirus: The Case for a Broad and Inclusive Government Response*. July 2020. [http://publications.unidosus.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/2066/unidosus\\_latinosinthetimeofcovid.pdf?sequence=7&isAllowed=y](http://publications.unidosus.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/2066/unidosus_latinosinthetimeofcovid.pdf?sequence=7&isAllowed=y).
- UnidosUS, *Padres Comprometidos Ed-Tech: Using Educational Technology to Support Student Success*. June 16, 2021. <https://www.unidosus.org/publications/2172-padres-comprometidos-ed-tech-using-educational-technology-to-support-student-success/?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- U.S. Department of Education. 2018. *English Language Learners in Public Schools*. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/2021/cgf\\_508c.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/2021/cgf_508c.pdf).
- U.S. Department of Education. 2019. *Supporting English Learners through Technology: What Districts and Teachers Say about Digital Learning Resources for English Learners*. Volume I: Final Report. <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/title-iii/180414.pdf>.
- U.S. Department of Justice. (2020). *Types of educational opportunities discrimination*. <https://www.justice.gov/crt/types-educationalopportunities-discrimination>.
- U.S. Government Accountability Office. 2020. *Distance Learning: Challenges Providing Services to K-12 English Learners and Students with Disabilities during COVID-19*. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/720/710779.pdf>.

## APPENDIX

### Focus Groups Protocols

1. Protocolo para los encuentros con las familias  
[https://www.unidosus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/sample\\_parentfocusgroups.pdf](https://www.unidosus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/sample_parentfocusgroups.pdf)
2. Teacher Focus Groups Protocol  
[https://www.unidosus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/sample\\_teacherfocusgroups.pdf](https://www.unidosus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/sample_teacherfocusgroups.pdf)



# UNIDOSUS

STRONGER COMMUNITIES. STRONGER AMERICA.

UnidosUS, previously known as NCLR (National Council of La Raza), is the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an [Affiliate Network](#) of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos at the national and local levels.

For more than 50 years, UnidosUS has united communities and different groups seeking common ground through collaboration, and that share a desire to make our country stronger.

For more information on UnidosUS, visit [www.unidosus.org](http://www.unidosus.org) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

UnidosUS  
Raul Yzaguirre Building  
1126 16th Street NW, Suite 600  
Washington, DC 20036-4845  
(202) 785-1670  
[unidosus.org](http://unidosus.org)

Copyright © 2021 by UnidosUS  
All rights reserved.