

CALL-TO-ACTION:

Memo for Governors



Dear Governors,

The [number of people in the United States](#) who speak a language other than English at home has nearly tripled over the last three decades, and our nation's students and workforce continue to grow more diverse and [more globally connected](#). [Multilingual learners](#) (MLs)² who have the ability to speak more than one language have many demonstrated [benefits](#): academic, cognitive, socio-cultural, and economic, among others. Yet, only [20 percent of the U.S. population](#) can communicate in two or more languages. The number of [English learners](#) (ELs)¹ are also growing, representing more than 5.3 million students in our nation's public schools. Promoting student home languages, culture, and knowledge as assets should be agreed upon as a shared responsibility for key education stakeholders. Doing this is important in meeting the strengths and needs of ELs in school and increasing access to high-quality language programs that maintain their home language, while introducing new languages to English only speaking students. This allows all students the opportunity to become fully bilingual and biliterate and possibly multilingual and multiliterate upon graduation.

There are many benefits for students to become multilingual, including a boost to post-secondary and career access, gaining industry language credentials, and connecting to a global economy. Just as important are the many benefits to states and their economies. Multilingualism can accelerate the economic viability of your state and can enhance its standing as a desirable destination to invest in business.

Furthermore, given the increase in manufacturing projects in the country due to investments in the Chips and Science Act and the Energy Provisions in the Inflation Reduction

Act, we are seeing an increase in employers that can/must communicate with multiple countries. [Nine out of 10 U.S. employers](#) report the need for employees to speak a language other than English. Studies have also shown that employers in healthcare, social services, trade, and professional and technical services are more likely to rely on employees with foreign language skills.

As a nation, we must recognize that being multilingual and multiliterate is an educational and economic imperative for our classrooms and communities. Thus, it is critical that state and local leaders work together to invest, act, promote, and support students who are ELs and MLs. Ensuring that language access and development in more than one language is a core aspect of daily learning, when developed explicitly, can accelerate academic achievement, postsecondary and career attainment, and global competitiveness and engagement.

States across the country have already developed goals that link state leaders, educators, and employers to ensure students have [pathways to career-connected learning](#). All 50 States and the District of Columbia offer the [Seal of Biliteracy](#), which officially encourages and recognizes the value of language proficiency in multiple languages. These advancements should be seen as gateways to elevate the need and possibilities for students to become multilingual.

Being Bilingual is a Superpower! We are proud to share this Call to Action to support your efforts to [promote pathways to multilingualism for all students](#) in your state!

In partnership,

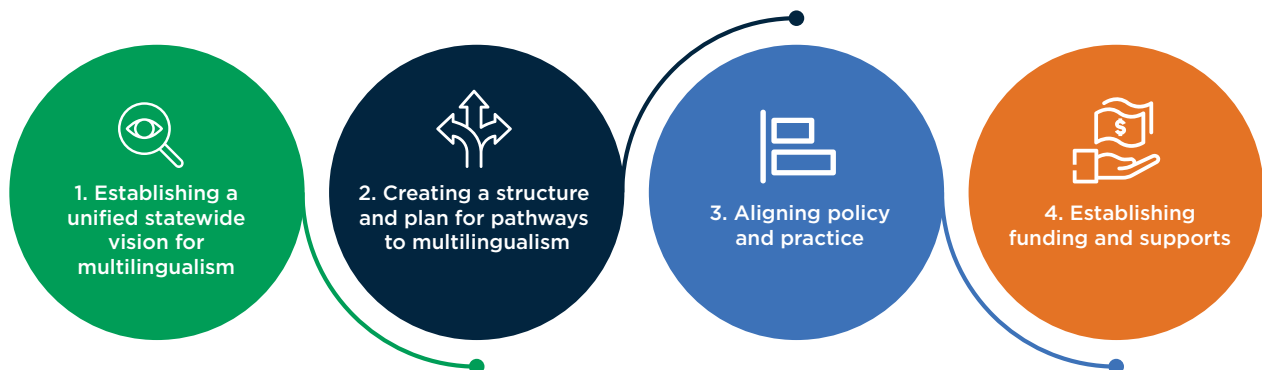
Miguel A. Cardona, Ed.D.

U.S. Secretary of Education

FOUR KEY ACTIONS

Governors play a significant role in Raising the Bar to [Create Pathways for Global Engagement](#).

This call-to-action memo provides key actions Governors can take including:





Action 1 – Establish a Unified Vision for Multilingualism

Governors create a clear vision that forms the foundation for needed policies, processes, programs, and practices to improve the lives of all students and adults that live in their states. Several states and Governors have already developed goals that amplify being multilingual, multiliterate, and multicultural as an in-demand valued asset in schools, communities, the workforce, and the nation.

When establishing a unified vision for multilingualism, consider how to:

- ✓ **Outline specific expectations** for state and local agencies to design and implement high-quality language pathways for individuals of all backgrounds.

- ✓ **Support efforts to increase access and supports** to high-quality language programs for ELs and other underrepresented (e.g., special education, native students, racial, and economically disadvantaged) communities, families, and learners.

- ✓ **Broadly amplify multilingualism as an asset for all students** using the power of the state's highest office to explicitly communicate the benefits of multilingualism and create awareness of the role learning languages can play in developing communication competencies to address state, national and global challenges, opportunities, and qualifications for fulfilling in-demand, high skill, high paying jobs.



EXAMPLES OF ACTION

Statewide initiatives and action:

- The [Governor's World Language Expansion Initiative](#) is Delaware's statewide initiative to strengthen its domestic economy and stress the importance of young Delawareans learning a world language other than English. Governor John Carney has continued the campaign for foreign language learning by signing [The Delaware Certificate of Multiliteracy](#).
- In 2010, the Utah Governor and State Superintendent of Public Instruction issued a challenge to Utah educators to implement one hundred [dual language immersion](#) (DLI) programs throughout the state by the 2014-15 school year. As of the 2023-2024 school year, there are 336 DLI programs statewide, serving a total of 49,451 students. Governor Spencer Cox signed [House Concurrent Resolution \(HCR.\) 022](#) "Concurrent Resolution Celebrating the Contributions of Multilingual and Multicultural Families to Utah Schools."
- [Global California 2030](#) is a call to action for educators, parents, and legislators to support multilingual Californians with the goal of expanding opportunities for all students to acquire world languages.

Addressing diverse student assets and needs:

- To strengthen comprehensive educational policies, programs and practices for ELs, California's State Board of Education approved the [English Learner Roadmap](#) to provide resources and guidance to carry out the state's vision and mission for ELs, current and former.
- The [Delaware English Learner Strategic Plan](#) was developed in collaboration with partners from across the state to better meet the linguistic and academic needs of ELs.
- To guide the shifts in educational practices and increase the numbers of current and former ELs participating in high-quality language programs, Rhode Island created the [Blueprint for ML Success](#) and [Strategic Plan](#).

- In 2023, Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont signed the Parent Bill of Rights into law as part of an education bill to ensure parents and guardians of students who are ELs and MLs understand their rights. The Connecticut State Board of Education was responsible for drafting the [Parent Bill of Rights for English Learners and Multilingual Learners](#).
- In Utah, administrative rule [R277](#) established rules to execute the state Board of Education’s duties and responsibilities for DLI programs including students who are ELs.
- The Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) at the Department has developed tools to create awareness of the benefits of [multilingualism](#) in multiple languages ([Spanish](#), [Chinese](#), [Arabic](#), [Hmong](#), [Somali](#), [Tagalog](#), [Vietnamese](#), [Russian](#), [Haitian Creole](#), and [Portuguese](#)), as well as a resource that explains [The Economic Benefits of Multilingualism](#).
- The Department’s [English Learner Playbook: Unlocking Career Success for Special Populations](#) provides ways to invest in, promote, and support students who are ELs and MLs and ensure language development is a core aspect of career-connected learning.

Amplify and advocate:

- Emphasize the importance of multilingualism at the policy level so that DLI is recognized as more than just enrichment for some students, but instead is seen as a right and model program for all students. State that multilingualism is a clear educational goal and create and implement policies prioritizing DLI education across states.
- Consideration should be given to the type of language programs that are called for at the state level moving away from subtractive models that do little to promote native language, and moving toward an additive model that develops native language while also teaching English. The department recently released the following [DLI Playbooks](#) to support state, local and site leaders in their efforts.



Action 2 – Create a Structure and Plan for Pathways to Multilingualism

Governors develop strategic plans and cross-agency teams to ensure the state’s vision can be implemented, measured, and responsive to student demographics, assets, communities, and labor market information. Effective pathways to multilingualism require a strategic and coordinated effort across state agencies, P-16 systems, workforce systems, and state and local partners.

When creating a management structure and plan, consider how to:

- ✓ **Implement the vision as a shared responsibility** bringing together leadership from across the state’s ecosystem (e.g., P-16 system, community and family partners, and

workforce and industry leaders) under a shared implementation plan.

- ✓ **Establish statewide partners** including community-based organizations, family and student advisory/advocacy groups, nonprofits, and other intermediary organizations, to help ensure that the state’s vision is rooted and responsive to the needs of all communities, the education system, and workforce.

- ✓ **Create a model of individual accountability** ensuring agency roles and responsibilities are visible, aligned, and embedded within governing documents like state education and workforce plans.



EXAMPLES OF ACTION

Governor-delegated state team or offices to manage coordination, implementation, and oversight of plans.

- In Maryland, Governor Wes Moore created [The Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments and Households](#) (ENOUGH) initiative driven by communities' lived experiences, expertise, data, and cross sector partnerships.

State-established councils and task forces to make recommendations and promote development and implementation of high-quality and equitable programs, resources, and supports.

- The North Carolina [State Advisory Council on English Learners \(SAC\)](#) advocates with government and community leaders to market program impact, develop resources and meet local needs.
- The New Mexico [Bilingual Multicultural Education Advisory Council](#) advises on the effective implementation of the [Bilingual Multicultural Education Act](#).
- Utah's [DLI Research Advisory Board](#) supports Utah school districts in managing the demand for access to DLI data, schools, and students.
- Rhode Island Governor McKee launched The Learning Equity, & Accelerated Pathways ([LEAP](#)) Task Force to understand impact on student learning in partnership with educational experts.
- The Illinois Advisory Council on Bilingual Education ([IACBE](#)) advises the State Superintendent on policy and rules pertaining to bilingual education. They were tasked with drafting [The Incentivizing Dual Language Education in Schools](#) report now published and submitted to the Illinois general assembly (PA103-0362).



Action 3 - Align Policy and Practices

Governors establish, drive, and influence current and future educational policies, processes, and practices. In doing so they must safeguard students' and families' rights and be responsive to the state's diverse constituents, economic needs, opportunities, and national impact.

When aligning policies and practices, consider how to:

- ✓ **Align state and federal legislation, policies, education priorities, and workforce and economic development goals** with state demographics and linguistic assets to address gaps and disparities in education, workforce, and opportunities for economic advancement.

- ✓ **Create urgency, relevance, and the critical need for pathways to multilingualism** focusing on research-based language and literacy practices emphasizing how language can become a core area of focus within an educational system.

- ✓ **Leverage current policies and practice** to center language and promote being multilingual, multiliterate, multicultural, and the benefits of explicitly creating educational pathways to multilingualism (i.e., Seal of Biliteracy policy, state literacy efforts and early learning initiatives, career-connected learning, out-of-school time, and summer learning).



EXAMPLES OF ACTION

Statewide legislation and policies:

- [Rhode Island's Multilingual Educators Investment Act](#) uses a multi-faceted approach to increasing the number of bilingual/dual language and world language teachers in public schools, key to expanding high-quality language programs to promote multilingualism throughout the state.
- [Building a Multilingual, Multiliterate Washington through Statewide Dual, and Tribal Language Education \(HB 1228\)](#) has established that a multilingual, multiliterate student body is better prepared to enter a global job market, has better academic and cognitive strengths, and can better connect with different communities and cultures across the state.
- Minnesota's Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success Act ([LEAPS](#)) is embedded in many of the states existing statutes to support the progress of all students learning language.
- [The Language and Equity and Access Act](#) ensures that language proficiency is not a barrier for Illinoisans seeking to access state agency resources. Signed and put in action by Illinois Governor JB Pritzker, [HB3222](#) provides that the Office of Language Equity and Access be created in the Governor's Office of New Americans.

Promising Practices:

- The [Seal of Biliteracy](#), which has been adopted by all 50 states and the District of Columbia, encourages students to pursue becoming bilingual and biliterate, [honors the linguistic skills attained](#), and can be evidence of the [language and literacy skills](#) needed for in demand, high-skilled, high-paying jobs.
- [The Power of Multilingualism in Career and Technical Education](#) considers language as an employability skill and underscores the importance of language in the workforce.
- The Department's [English Learner Playbook for Unlocking Career Success](#) promotes career-connected learning for students who are ELs, particularly of high importance as they are a growing force in our nation's schools and will be essential to meeting national workforce needs.



Action 4 - Establish Funding and Supports

Governors propose appropriate funding and allocating of critical resources to meet the needs of students, the communities they are part of, and their families. Investments and support for pathways to multilingualism demonstrate what states value and are key to the growth and well-being of the state.

When establishing funding and support, consider how to:

✓ **Blend and braid funding sources** to

support statewide cohesion between P-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems, including the full range of federal and state funding sources, as well as incorporating philanthropic and private sector funding.

✓ **Propose new or increased funding** of state investments through budgetary authority.

✓ **Designate** funding in the state's budget to provide access to high-quality language programming.

- ✓ **Assess and adjust** state investments to educational outputs and outcomes by collecting current state and local data.

Analyze data demonstrating how students who are ELs, and other students benefit from participating in DLI initiatives.



EXAMPLES OF ACTION

Innovative funding and support:

- In [California](#), Elk Grove Unified School District braids CTE and Title III funds to develop units of instruction bridging computer science and English language development.
- Utah passed the International Initiatives ([Senate Bill 41](#)) in 2008, creating funding for Utah Schools to begin DLI Programs. During the 2023 legislative session, [House Bill 161](#) provided additional on-going funding.
- Rhode Island's #RIReady budget proposal includes [Governors Dan McKee's commitment](#) to investing in multilingual learners to address the strengths and needs of the fast-growing population across the state.
- Texas began reforming funding structures through [HB3](#) in 2019 to promote moving from statewide bilingual education programs to [Dual Language Immersion](#) programs.
- In 2015 Indiana [passed SB267](#) Dual Language Immersion; Biliteracy Legislation which provided an appropriation to [fund grants](#) for school corporations and charter schools to support the development of [Dual Language Immersion programs](#).
- The 2023-2024 [Indiana Dual Language Program](#) is intended to establish and maintain a Dual Language Pilot Program to provide grants to school corporations and charter schools.
- In New York, advocacy for funding from government entities and foundations has successfully supported DLI programs.
- Hawaii Governor Josh Green signed HB2074 measure appropriating \$3.5 million to support [Kaiapoi Education](#).

ENDNOTES

1. [Section 8101 \(20\)](#) of the ESEA defines "English learner" as an individual— (A) who is aged 3 through 21; (B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school; (C)(i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; (ii)(I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and (D) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual— (i) the ability to meet the challenging state academic standards; (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.
2. Retrieved from: <https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/multilingual-learners>



For more information please visit ed.gov.

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