

Assembly Bill 1363

Dual Language Learner

Assemblywoman Luz Rivas

SUMMARY

California is home to the nation's largest population of dual language learners (DLLs). Recognizing the unique language needs of our State, the Governor released the "Master Plan for Early Learning and Care: California for All Kids (Master Plan)." The Master Plan outlines a roadmap for building comprehensive and equitable early learning systems over the next decade.

However, the Master Plan does not go into detail about how the steps will be carried out. AB 1363 takes the critical first step in implementing the recommendations from the Governor's Master Plan for Early Learning and Care for supporting DLLs.

BACKGROUND

In 1998, Proposition 227 (Prop 227) required K-12 in-class instructions be taught in English. Prop 227, at its core eliminated bilingual classroom instruction. In 2016, California passed Proposition 58 (Prop 58), the California Education for a Global Economy Initiative, which repealed Prop 227.

With the passage of Prop 58, the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted the California English Learner Roadmap policy in 2017. This passage of Prop 58 meant California collectively rejects the notion that home languages are barriers to learning and success. Rather, the State took the stance that encouraging and nurturing at-home languages along with English fluency helps young children develop in learning and broadens their understanding of the diverse world around them.

In December 2020, California Governor Gavin Newsom released the Master Plan intended to transform the State's approach to early childhood education. The Master Plan builds upon the Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission's report that access to high-quality early learning and care improves outcomes for all children and families and helps address racial and economic inequities. It calls for legislation to require developmental assessments both in English and in children's home languages, and development of preschool curriculum frameworks and materials to be updated to include bilingual materials.

PROBLEM

Sixty percent of children under age six come from homes where English is not the primary language. Students are usually tested and identified as DLLs when they enter kindergarten. However, it is important to identify and foster DLLs when they enter preschool because when at-home languages are not fostered, a child can become completely monolingual, choosing to respond to English within six or eight weeks of starting preschool. Research shows that achieving fluency in multiple languages benefits children and students by broadening their cognitive flexibility, enhancing their ability to learn, and giving students the opportunity to become bi- or multi-lingual so that they are competitive in the global workforce.

Despite the state's positive shift acknowledging linguistic and cultural diversity as assets, the Master Plan lacks details about exactly how the steps will be carried out. There is no consistent manner of identifying DLLs in California's Early Learning system. The absence of information about the state's DLLs impairs the ability of state policymakers to make informed decisions over resources and other critical elements of Early Learning programs that could be leveraged to nurture and develop the early linguistic assets of these children for their benefit and the greater benefit of California.

The first step to achieving the goals of the Master Plan, is to identify DLLs.

SOLUTION

AB 1363 takes the first steps in achieving the goals of the Master Plan to identify and support DLLs. Specifically, this bill will establish a definition for DLLs, develop a standard process for California State Preschool Program providers to identify the DLLs, and require providers to report key information about DLLs to the state.

CONTACT

Judy Yee, Legislative Director
916-319-2039 | Judy.Yee@asm.ca.gov

SUPPORT

Advancement Project California (co-sponsor)

California Association of Bilingual Educators (co-sponsor)

Californians Together (co-sponsor)

Early Edge California (co-sponsor)

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