

Policy and Practice
Implications for
University of Chicago
Early Childhood and
English Learner Study



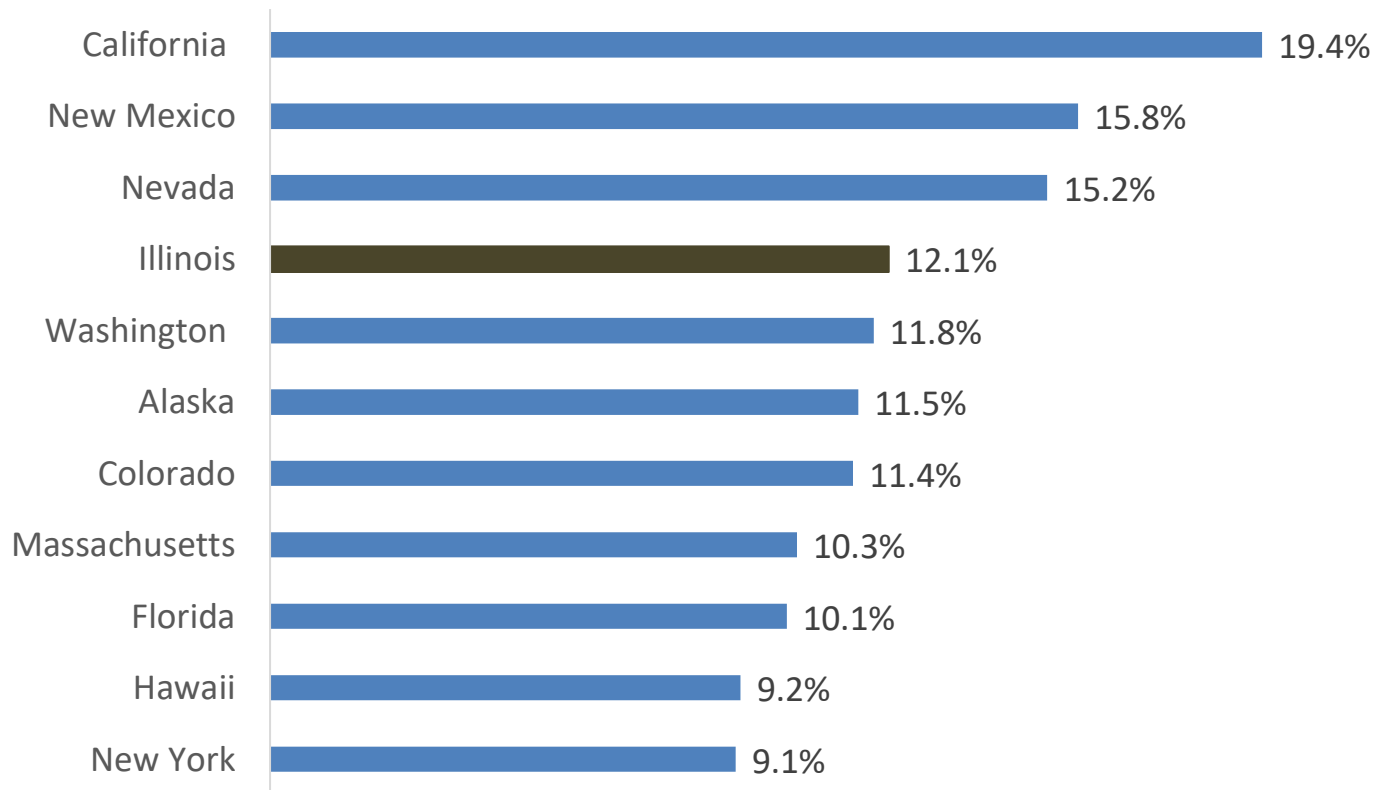
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Intro and Purpose

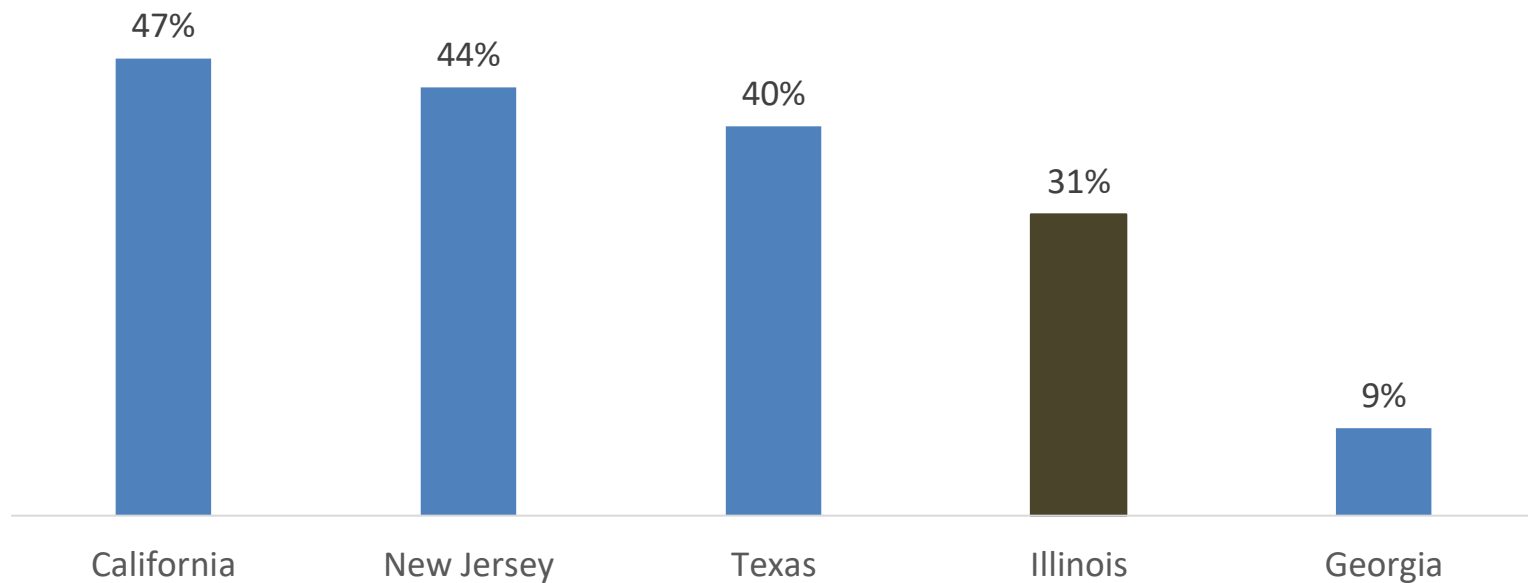
- ***Purpose:*** *As the state and nation look to expand preschool, how can this research influence policy and practice to benefit English Learners?*
- Great **growth in ELs**. In most states, students are identified as English Learners in kindergarten or first grade.
- Illinois is one of the few states that **requires English Learner services as early as age 3**.
- Research and policy have given great attention to the **importance of early childhood**, especially preschool education beginning as early as age three.
- As Illinois and the nation consider expansion of preschool services, it is incredibly timely that the University of Chicago conducted an extensive study (2021) focused on **English Learners in the early years**.

Percent of Public School Students Who were English Learners in Fall 2018



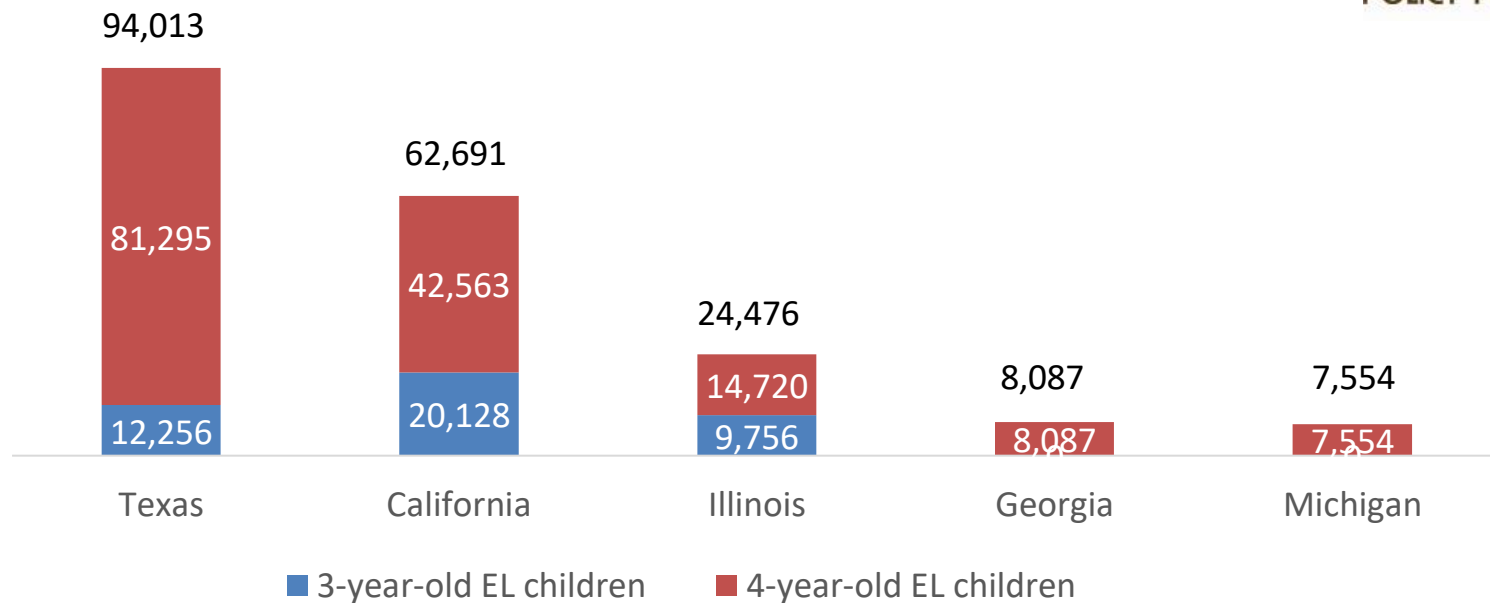
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency Universe Survey," 2018–19. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table [204.20](#).

Percent of Preschool State-Funded Program Enrollment Who are ELs in 2016-2017



Source: NIEER. (2017) Special Report: Supporting Dual Language Learners in State-Funded Preschool

EL Children Enrolled in State Funded Preschool Programs by Age in 2014-15, Top 5 States

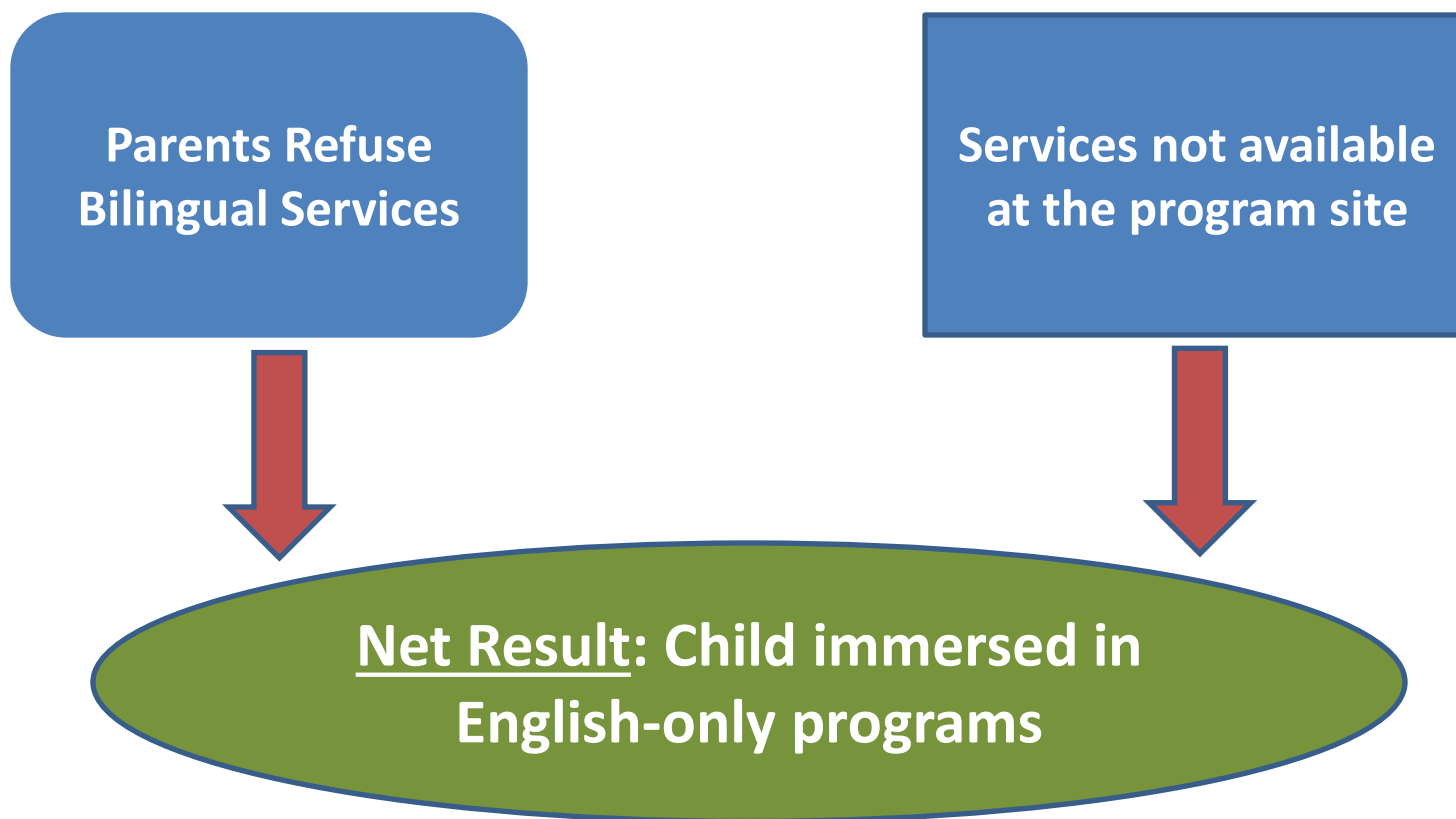


Source: NIEER. (2015). Special Report: Dual Language Learners and Preschool Workforce

Illinois English Learner PreK Policy Requirements since SY 2014-15

- Conduct screener within first 30 days of enrollment by licensed bilingual educator
- Required home language and English as a Second language instruction
- Required licensed teacher with Bilingual/ESL endorsement and specialized professional development
- ISBE provides oversight and accountability for English Learner programs
- **Critical challenge to implementation: shortage of qualified bilingual early childhood education teachers**

Lack of English Learner Services in Early Childhood Programs



Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Two Audiences

- (1) Policy: Decisionmakers and early childhood governance structures
- (2) Practice: Educators and preschool providers

Recommendations for Policy: Decisionmakers and ECE Governance

- ✓ RECOMMENDATION: Policymakers and district leaders should **expand and prioritize access for English Learners beginning at age 3 for two-years of full-day preschool that complies with Illinois and federal law regarding English Learner services and instruction.**

Policy Cont.

- ✓ **RECOMMENDATION: Policymakers and early childhood governance must provide oversight to ensure that early childhood programming complies with federal and state mandated English Learner requirements if programming is to be deemed research-based and high quality.**

Funding

Program Evaluation

Oversight of federal and state requirements

Policy Cont.

- ✓ **RECOMMENDATION: Policymakers, early childhood governance structures, and school districts must increase investments in recruiting and retaining a bilingual educator workforce the prepares young English Learners from preschool-to-third grade.**

Practice Considerations

English Learner Status	Level
English Learner	A – Beginning (non-English speaking)
	B – Early intermediate (limited English speaking)
	C – Intermediate (limited English speaking)
	D – Early advanced (limited English speaking)
Not an English Learner	E – Advanced (fluent English speaking)

How can educators and preschool provider capacity be enhanced to both understand the screener data and take action to serve young English Learners before kindergarten?

Research shows new significance about the screener data that was not known before.

Pre-IPT Oral English Language Proficiency Test Levels and EL Status

Recommendations for Practice: Educators and Preschool Providers

- ✓ **RECOMMENDATION:** Local school leaders and preschool providers **should develop a system of student identification for English Learners who score in lowest category for the English language proficiency screener. Students identified should receive additional instruction to ensure that they are kindergarten ready.**

Supporting Parents with Research- based decisions

What do parents of English Learners need to know about what matters for their child's long-term educational success?

Parents of English Learners have a variety of needs when deciding on preschool programs for their children:

- flexible scheduling;
- distance to the program; and
- extended day and wrap around services.

******They might not be thinking about language instruction for their child.***

Practice Cont.

- ✓ **RECOMMENDATION:** District leaders and preschool providers must inform parents and caregivers of the **research that demonstrates the long-term benefits of bilingual/ESL early childhood programs.**

Practice Cont.

- ✓ **RECOMMENDATION:** District leaders and preschool providers must **provide additional supports and language instruction to English Learners who have an identified disability.** Educational leaders should **make every effort to provide special education services that also follow policies regarding English Learners.** The additional services and instruction should also aim improve these students' attendance.

Initial Illinois action steps

- **The Forum is working to publish these policy and practice recommendations**
- **Exploring Legislative and Administrative Advocacy based on these recommendations as the state aims to transform and expand early childhood education.**
- **Developing professional development for education leaders to build their capacity in understanding the needs of English Learners**
- **Prioritizing parent engagement about the benefits of bilingual education.**

Now we want
to hear from
you!

Polling questions



Which of the findings is the most important for the public to know?

- Factors associated with stronger outcomes for ELs in pre-k and early grades
 - Exposure to pre-k, especially full-day pre-k
 - Receiving Bilingual Education Services
- To what extent can schools identify ELs who would benefit from additional support?
 - Use screener data to support students with low initial English proficiency levels
 - Students with identified disabilities

Which of the policy priorities is the most important to you for serving ELs in prek?



- ✓ **Expand and prioritize access** beginning at age 3 for two-years of full-day preschool that complies with English Learner requisites.
- ✓ **Continued oversight** to ensure that expansion efforts comply with English Learner requirements.
- ✓ Increased investments in **recruiting and retaining a bilingual educator workforce**
- ✓ Develop a **system of student identification for English Learners who score in lowest category for the English language proficiency screener.**
- ✓ **Inform parents and caregivers of the research**
- ✓ **Provide additional supports and language instruction to English Learners who have an identified disability.**

Questions?

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