


## ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Date: 6/2/2016

### MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Bruce Rauner, Governor  
The Honorable John J. Cullerton, Senate President  
The Honorable Christine Radogno, Senate Republican Leader  
The Honorable Michael J. Madigan, Speaker of the House  
The Honorable Jim Durkin, House Republican Leader

FROM: Tony Smith, Ph.D.   
State Superintendent of Education

SUBJECT: Bilingual Advisory Task Force Report

On behalf of the Illinois Bilingual Advisory Task Force, which was created under House Joint Resolution 36, I am pleased to submit the Final Report and Recommendations.

The Bilingual Advisory Task Force was charged with the following specific tasks:

- To evaluate whether the framework for existing bilingual education, including Transitional Bilingual Education programs and the Transitional Program of Instruction, is appropriate for learning today;
- To evaluate the use of learning technologies in bilingual education to ensure that the same techniques, types of software, and hardware are used to educate English Learners as are provided today for mainstream classrooms;
- To examine the competencies, experience, and coursework necessary to teach in a setting in which English Learners are involved;
- To make recommendations that will ensure that all bilingual programs focus on the parallel goals of achieving academic parity for English Learners while, at the same time, accelerating English proficiency so that bilingual students are prepared to perform well in the mainstream classroom;
- To make recommendations regarding whether the existing requirement and supporting regulations for bilingual education lead to deployment of all necessary educational, technological, and human resources to support the academic success of bilingual students.

cc: Tim Mapes, Clerk of the House  
Tim Anderson, Secretary of the Senate  
Legislative Research Unit

State Government Report CenterThe following individuals were appointed and served on the task force:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title*</b>	<b>Primary Affiliation*</b>
Dr. Ron Perlman	President	The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning
Dr. Carmen I. Ayala	Superintendent	Berwyn North School District 98
Representative Mike Fortner	Illinois State Representative	Illinois General Assembly
Mr. Robert F. de Oliveira	Assistant Principal	Kankakee HS District 111
Ms. Denise M. Hamby	Middle School ESL Teacher	Beardstown Community Unit School District 15
Ms. Carla Marie Cruise	ELL Director/Bilingual Teacher	Collinsville CUSD 10
Dr. Matthew K. Moreland	Principal	Aptakisic-Tripp School District 102
Mr. David Del Poso Martin	ELL Teacher	Peoria School District 150
Ms. Colleen Doyle-Parrott	Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment	Carbondale Elementary School District 95
Dr. Michael Popp	Superintendent	Aurora East School District 131
Mr. Jason Leahy	Executive Director	Illinois Principals Association

Mr. Okab T. Hassan	Principal	Chicago Public Schools 299
Ms. Karen Garibay-Mulattieri	Chief Officer of Language and Cultural Education	Chicago Public School District 299
Dr. David Gonzalez Nieto	Division Administrator	Division of English Language Learning, Illinois State Board of Education
Mr. Nelson Aguiar	Associate Director for ESL & Immigrant Issues	Illinois Community College Board
Representative Linda Chapa LaVia	Illinois State Representative	Illinois General Assembly

The members are representative of the entire state of Illinois and they have actively participated in the drafting and review of the final report. The final report includes a series of specific recommendations that we believe will improve all aspects of English language learning in Illinois, to the benefit of students, teachers, schools and statewide program effectiveness.

# **The Collaboration Imperative:**

Recommendations for Continuing and Expanding Illinois' Commitment  
to Excellence in Education for English Learners

**Illinois Bilingual Advisory Task Force**

May 2016

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## Executive Summary

The Illinois Bilingual Advisory Task Force – a group of teachers, administrators, legislators, and other stakeholders – was created by the Illinois General Assembly in 2015 to provide a practitioner's point of view of 1) the status of English language learning services in public schools, and 2) realistic steps that can lead to improved academic achievement. The Task Force's *The Collaboration Imperative* (May 2016) report identifies and explores seven major issues that impact English Learner (EL) education, explains current evidence and research surrounding those issues, and provides recommendations for addressing each issue.

The report's title emphasizes collaboration because all of the major issues and related recommendations require collaboration among various types of stakeholders in EL education: teachers, administrators, government and external agencies, students and their families, and the larger community. **All must become invested in working together to serve EL students.**

Also underlying the report is a commitment to recognizing the diversity of the Illinois EL population and adapting services to ensure access to education for all. Many of the recommendations are geared toward the development of skills across the curriculum and the achievement of long-term academic and career success, acknowledging that English language proficiency is only one indicator of EL students' abilities.

The following is a summary of the major issues identified in the report and the recommendations for addressing each issue:

**1. More ELs are enrolled today in more school districts statewide than ever before.** While the majority of EL students are in the Chicago area, their numbers are growing throughout Illinois, and the diversity of native languages is growing as well. This increases the need for native language support to ensure that EL students develop academic skills and have access to high-level content and to provide accurate assessments of EL students' abilities. The growth and change in the EL population also intensify the need for interpreters and other services to students' families, as well as for better resources to identify and serve EL students with disabilities and gifted EL students.

**2. In comparison with their peers, EL students lack access to technology.** Technology provides incredible opportunities for students to access high-level content in a language they understand, to customize their learning, and to connect with their communities. The Task Force recommends taking advantage of technology that students already own, especially smartphones, as well as increasing access to and information about educational technologies. It also calls for the formation of two types of digital communities: one to facilitate communication and professional learning for teachers and administrators across the state, and another to build upon existing social media structures to engage families.

**3. EL students often lag behind their native English peers academically even after transitioning to English-dominant classrooms.** Many do not have the specialized language skills to succeed in an all-English environment, and they become overwhelmed when they no longer receive native language support. The “siloing” of EL programs from general education is often a factor in this: EL curricula do not align with general education programs, and EL students

become socially isolated as well. The Task Force stresses the importance of consistency between general education programs and EL, and continuity between K-8 programs and high school. Partnerships with businesses will increase students' access to high-level content. Schools must become hubs of information and resources for EL students, providing ongoing support and guiding them toward careers and life skills.

**4. Innovative, successful approaches to EL education are not widely or consistently implemented.** Many current instructional formats emphasize language acquisition at the expense of other content areas and do not promote native language literacy. Collaboration among districts must be fostered, so districts that serve EL students successfully can share strategies. Schools and districts must be given the freedom to adapt EL programs to their students' needs. The Task Force supports initiatives like dual language programs and ISBE's Seal of Biliteracy award that promote proficiency in multiple languages.

**5. Current assessments do not reflect EL students' growth and achievements.** In many cases, EL students' development is measured solely in terms of English language proficiency. When they are assessed in other subject areas, language and cultural differences often impede their performance. Students must be given the opportunity to demonstrate academic achievement in a language they understand. The Task Force encourages schools to complement summative assessments with formative assessments, including reviews of student work and teacher observations. Ecological assessments that incorporate a student's environment must inform student placement and guide the identification of gifted EL students and EL students with disabilities. Longitudinal assessments must be implemented to ensure that students continue to excel academically after they have transitioned to general education classes.

**6. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) increases funding for EL instruction and assessment, but also imposes more rigorous standards.** Illinois needs to develop a comprehensive plan that identifies and coordinates the many sources of ESSA funding so it can implement them toward improving EL education. Ongoing, accessible communication to districts and schools about ESSA standards is also crucial.

**7. Endorsements, credentials, and professional learning resources for teachers and administrators must be updated and expanded.** Many EL educators' training is no longer in line with current research about effective EL practices. Meanwhile, most teachers and administrators outside the EL "silo" have limited expertise related to serving ELs. Collaboration between EL educators and their general education counterparts must increase, and licensing criteria must be updated. The Task Force recommends the implementation of micro-credentialing so that EL teachers, general education teachers, and administrators can refresh their knowledge and show evidence of the skills they have gained. The above recommendations embrace the idea of expanded collaboration among educators -- and among schools and the resources of their communities -- to meet the needs of individual EL students.

**8. The Task Force seeks to challenge the idea that English language learning is or should be a siloed activity separate from the other services provided by a school or district. Instead, while some teachers and administrators will always take the lead in addressing the needs of EL students, those needs should also become a part of the planning and execution of all school objectives in all grades and subjects.** The long-term trend toward larger enrollments of EL students will continue to impact all schools and almost all classrooms. Educators who do not consider the unique needs of ELs or prepare for their entry into their classrooms are likely to become overwhelmed by the challenges of serving linguistically and culturally diverse students, to the detriment of students, teachers, administrators, and families. Nonetheless, Illinois has access to a wealth of resources that can facilitate the continuation of Illinois' longstanding commitment to excellence in EL education. By taking advantage of these resources and collaborating toward innovation, Illinois will continue to lead the nation in the educational services it provides for its growing EL population.



## **Illinois Bilingual Advisory Task Force Final Report**

### **Introduction**

This document is, itself, a collaborative work. The Illinois Bilingual Advisory Task Force was created by the Illinois General Assembly in 2015 to provide a practitioner’s point of view of 1) the status of English language learning services in public schools,<sup>1</sup> and 2) realistic steps that can lead to improved academic achievement. In the process of generating this report, we discovered that a theme of collaboration underlies our observations and recommendations. Many of the challenges to providing excellent EL services arise from insufficient collaboration among teachers, administrators, government and external agencies, students and their families, and the larger community. Similarly, many longstanding problems in EL education can only be addressed by increasing opportunities and resources for collaboration among these groups.

The present report summarizes the Task Force members’ identification of the issues surrounding EL services and recommendations for steps the State of Illinois can practically and effectively implement in all Illinois public EL teaching and learning environments to support EL students’ academic achievement. The Task Force believes that such gains will be achieved only when bilingual and ESL services are, in a collaborative and flexible way, fully integrated within the planning and instructional structure of all educators in every school and district. In addition, districts must create more opportunities for EL students to develop cross-curricular skills and solve real-world problems by broadening relationships with businesses, cultural organizations, and community groups.

All Task Force members—including teachers, administrators, legislators and other stakeholders (see Appendix A)—are familiar with current research about language acquisition, the challenges faced by ELs at school and in their communities, exemplary bilingual and ESL programs, the achievement gap, and other relevant topics that are the focuses of hundreds of studies nationwide each year. In preparing this report, the Task Force compiled an extensive bibliography of the studies that influenced its views, and the Task Force has used these studies to provide supporting evidence for the existence and relevance of the major issues that it has identified. Nonetheless, these studies are not, in themselves, the basis for the Task Force’s recommendations. Instead, Task Force members have relied primarily on their own extensive experiences to ensure that the recommendations are realistic, practical, and meaningful.

The Task Force is encouraged by ESSA’s increased emphasis on English learning and remains committed to the intent of Section 14C of the Illinois School Code to ensure that every child, regardless of his/her native language, receives the finest possible education and preparation for adulthood. Indeed, the Task Force believes that the responsibility for improved outcomes for

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document, “EL” will be used to describe students who are English Learners. English as a second language (ESL), bilingual education, and dual language instruction are approaches to addressing the needs of ELs.

language-minority students must now be embraced more broadly by the entire school community. As educator Margo Gottlieb has written:

English learners are the collective responsibility of districts and all stakeholders within those districts . . . It is critical that district administrators, school leaders, teachers and other instructional personnel, in collaboration with...family members and the community at large, develop a cohesive and systemic support structure to meet the students' varying needs.<sup>2</sup>

The Task Force enthusiastically endorses and supports this view, which is consistent with ISBE initiatives such as increasing family engagement and enrolling more low-income students and students of color in advanced placement or college-level courses. Schools in 86 percent of Illinois' counties already provide services for EL students, and it is certain that linguistically and culturally diverse student enrollments will continue to grow.<sup>3</sup> As more and more schools in Illinois respond to the need for EL services and as the diversity of cultural backgrounds and native languages continues to expand, the necessity for consistency and strong communication grows, as does the importance of accessibility and adaptability. To achieve these aims – clarity and structure on the one hand and flexibility and practicality on the other – it is essential for the many stakeholders in EL education to work together. There is no alternative to focused collaboration among all educators in all disciplines if improved outcomes are to occur.

### **Organization and Focus**

Task Force members focused on the following areas to gather pertinent information and offer recommendations:

a. **Legal Framework** – New federal guidelines under ESSA and the latest Illinois guidelines were examined to determine what Illinois must do to maintain its compliance with federal regulations and standards, and whether the state's regulatory structure is otherwise fully up to date. The Task Force explored opportunities for modification of state regulations to encourage new instructional methodologies, resource equity, and improved student achievement. It also considered how to maximize possible federal funding from ESSA to ensure that Illinois is receiving its fair share.

Legislative changes to education policy are occurring both nationally and within Illinois. Now that Congress has authorized ESSA, the U.S. Department of Education is developing rules and regulations and Illinois is working to formulate a State Plan that complies with the new federal mandates. This legislative attention to education provides an opportune time for Illinois to seriously reconsider how to best meet the educational needs of its growing EL population. The law equips Illinois to help ELs develop English language proficiency while meeting general academic standards, and it ensures that schools have latitude to measure ELs in their native languages to appropriately gauge growth and achievement.

Specifically, ESSA provides for the expanded development of native language assessment and for Title I funding of such materials. It also creates opportunities to generate a continuum of

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<sup>2</sup> Gottlieb, M. (2012).

<sup>3</sup> Illinois State Board of Education (2015 - 1), p. 5.

assessments that respond to the needs of EL students at different levels of proficiency. Some EL students can only demonstrate their proficiency in subjects like mathematics and science if assessments are available in their native languages, while others require support in order to succeed on predominantly English language assessments. ESSA creates the opportunity to provide different types of assessment support to EL students with different proficiency levels.

**b. Assessment** – The Task Force examined existing and potential assessment techniques to find an effective balance among formative, summative, and teacher observation that will maximize student progress. One important goal is to update assessments so that teachers can more easily tailor instructional planning to meet the needs of all students as a term progresses. Equally important is the screening of students using broader ecological assessments that take into account the student’s home environment, health, and developmental learning needs as well as their English language proficiency needs to ensure that placements are appropriate and focused on each student’s particular needs and circumstances.

With this added sensitivity to the continuum of EL proficiency, however, comes an added mandate for accountability for ELs' academic progress. A greater emphasis on the distinction between social language proficiency and academic language proficiency brings a greater need for EL instruction that helps students master the English vocabulary relevant to their studies, especially in junior high and high school. Academic language is often a challenge even for students whose native language is English, and as a result, most EL students continue to require support even after meeting the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) exit criteria.

Now that ESSA creates opportunities for native language assessments, a door has been opened toward accurately assessing the knowledge and abilities of ELs. At the same time, there is an increased need for distinct but complementary assessments of English language proficiency and of academic achievement. The Illinois Seal of Biliteracy provides another avenue for measuring and rewarding the accomplishments of EL students, establishing that the attainment of academic literacy in more than one language is unique, notable, and worthy of long-term recognition.

**c. Curriculum and Instruction** – Teachers, schools, and districts throughout Illinois have developed instructional approaches that work, including native language instruction, mediated instruction strategies, dual language instruction, the effective use of paraprofessionals and other support staff, and many other strategies that lead to bilingual and bicultural proficiency. The Task Force examined these approaches to identify the most effective ones and to determine why they work, so that bilingual educators can implement them as efficiently and beneficially as possible in both curriculum and instruction. It then investigated methods for building collaboration among EL and general education teachers that will facilitate interdisciplinary approaches and multiple methodologies, giving Illinois’ EL students access to more adaptable, practical, and effective curriculum and instruction. The Task Force also explored ways to effectively provide pathways to employment for EL students by expanding student skill sets, including incorporation of workforce content into the curriculum, internships, and job shadowing. It considered the impact on curriculum and instruction of the new Illinois

partnership with the Lead Higher Initiative, which seeks to close equity gaps in high school Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses.

One of the major discrepancies between EL classrooms and general education classrooms is the quality and sophistication of available materials. In particular, EL students often experience less access to technological tools and they are given insufficient instruction in how to take advantage of the tools they already have, such as smartphones. We have explored ways to evaluate materials for quality and utility, to increase access to high-quality materials, and to help teachers and students understand how to use those materials to their fullest potential. This is one of several instances in which technology facilitates communities of practice in which educators and districts can share resources and evaluate them collaboratively.

**d. Certification and Training** – The Task Force examined existing bilingual and ESL endorsement requirements to determine if they meet the needs of students today. Some instructional frameworks require high levels of dual language proficiency by teachers to succeed. Others require higher levels of technological proficiency among educators. The Task Force explored the extent to which existing professional learning resources need to be enhanced and recommended adjustments as necessary. It considered possibilities for creating a micro-credentialing system that might provide EL teachers with specialized expertise in technology and administrators and general education content area teachers with specialized expertise in supporting ELs.

**e. Community and Family Engagement** — Research suggests that bilingual students benefit when their communities, and especially their parents or caregivers, are engaged and supportive. The Task Force examined engagement methodologies to identify effective techniques for encouraging and supporting parent and community involvement. The Task Force also investigated ways in which the community—including businesses—can support EL content area achievement.

**f. Technology Use** – The promise of educational technology and digitally assisted learning has not been used to its fullest potential in most Illinois EL programs; in some cases, digital learning tools are not used at all in EL classrooms. The Task Force identified what must be done to provide effective, technologically current classrooms for EL education. It also explored ways of using technology to more effectively engage parents and communities.

**g. Institutional Leadership** – It is essential that EL educators have the understanding and support of school and district administrators. The Task Force identified best practices in administrative engagement in EL education. It also explored ways of approaching the different administration needs of schools with different types of EL populations. In many cases, micro-credentialing provides administrators with the opportunity to efficiently develop the skills and knowledge base to support EL students and communities more effectively.

## Task Force Underlying Issues, Evidence, and Recommendations

Seven underlying issues guided and structured the Task Force's efforts as it reviewed existing research on EL education, then offered insights and recommendations. In the sections that follow, each underlying issue – and the assumptions and understandings that surround it – is summarized. Then, examples of the evidence from the Task Force's extensive bibliography of studies pertaining to each issue and their relevance to bilingual education are described, with pertinent sources cited. Finally, the Task Force's recommendations for addressing the issue more effectively are discussed.

### **1. The demographics of English Learners in Illinois have changed significantly since the adoption of Article 14C of the School Code.**

More ELs are enrolled today in more school districts statewide than ever before. These numbers continue to grow, as well as the number of native languages spoken in each district. The changing demographics indicate an increasing number of students requiring EL services, an increasing need for EL-related professional learning in a larger number of school districts, and an increasing need for teachers and administrators to work together to plan and execute effective strategies for EL students.

**Evidence:** In fiscal year 1997, fewer than 134,000 students were enrolled in Illinois public school bilingual programs. Nearly two-thirds of those students were enrolled in Chicago; only 4.25 percent were enrolled outside of Chicago and its collar counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will). Instruction was provided to students who spoke 99 different native languages in FY 1997. In the most recent reporting year (2012-13), bilingual program enrollments grew 55 percent, to nearly 210,000 students. While most of these students were concentrated in Chicago, Cook County, and the collar counties, the number and proportion of bilingual students enrolled in school districts outside the Chicago area more than doubled, to more than 10 percent of the total. The number of native languages spoken by EL students in Illinois also grew substantially, to a total of 142. As a consequence, bilingual services are offered today by more than 680 school districts located in 88 of the state's 102 counties.<sup>4</sup>

Illinois regulations already require that information be provided to parents in a language that they understand. Section 226.530 of Title 23 of the Illinois Administrative Code states, the district shall take whatever action is necessary to facilitate the parents understanding of and participation in the proceedings at a meeting, including arranging for and covering the expense of an interpreter for parents whose native language is other than English.<sup>5</sup>

As the EL population increases, the need to identify and serve EL students with disabilities increases accordingly, but a number of studies show that EL students are less likely to be diagnosed and treated, or to receive school support. A technical report from the American Academy of Pediatrics shows that Hispanic and Asian children – the ethnic groups most likely to be ELs – receive poorer health care than their white counterparts, a problem that is “extensive,

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<sup>4</sup> Illinois State Board of Education (2015 - 1), pp. 5-9.

<sup>5</sup> Ill. Admin. Code tit. 23, pt. 226.530.

pervasive, and persistent.”<sup>6</sup> Because EL students are often socioeconomically disadvantaged, they are at higher risk for learning disabilities, but Hispanic and Asian students are under-placed in special education programs relative to white and African-American students.<sup>7</sup> This suggests that many EL students with learning disabilities and developmental delays are not being identified. Similarly, most tests for giftedness do not account for linguistic and cultural diversity, so academically gifted EL students are under-identified and underserved.<sup>8</sup>

### **Recommendations:**

- Illinois must broaden its definition of native language support. In addition to hiring bilingual/ESL teachers, Illinois must look to other types of support for ELs. For example, Illinois can advocate for dual language programs to support ELs’ maximum exposure to native English speakers. At the same time, native English speakers who are enrolled in dual language programs can develop more positive attitudes toward EL students and are more likely to interact socially with EL students.
- With the increase in EL students at all grade levels throughout Illinois comes the challenge of providing native language support, particularly for high-level content. It is incumbent upon the state to explore ways in which businesses, community groups, technology, and other resources can provide native language support to EL students studying advanced course content.
- The Illinois Family Engagement Framework and Matrix is an important resource. It helps school districts identify ways to reduce EL families’ isolation from the general population and engage EL families in supporting their children’s continued educational achievement. Districts and schools should be encouraged to take advantage of this online resource, and professional learning opportunities should be made available to help educators utilize it to its fullest extent and adapt it to local needs.
- As the EL population grows, the number of family members with limited English proficiency also grows. Schools must provide well-qualified interpreters at both one-on-one interactions with students’ family members and at public meetings so that teachers and administrators can communicate effectively with these family members. As stated in last year’s “Dear Colleague” letter from the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education, “It is not sufficient for the staff merely to be bilingual... school districts should ensure that interpreters and translators have knowledge in both languages of any specialized terms or concepts to be used in the communication at issue. In addition, school districts should ensure that interpreters and translators are trained on the role of an interpreter and

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<sup>6</sup> Flores (2010), p. e979.

<sup>7</sup> Hibel et. al. (2010).

<sup>8</sup> Matthews (2009).

translator, the ethics of interpreting and translating, and the need to maintain confidentiality.”<sup>9</sup>

Within the EL population is a substantial sub-population of students with disabilities, as well as a sub-population of academically gifted students; some students fall into both categories. EL students in both groups are under-identified and underserved. Resources must be developed to identify EL students who require these types of services, and programs put in place that address language needs while also maximizing the opportunities for disabled and gifted EL students.

- The requirement for interpreters is already part of the State Code, but this law must be both strengthened and enforced. A system should be implemented to ensure that interpreters are qualified in terms of language proficiency as well as in understanding the role and ethical responsibilities of an interpreter. As the population of EL parents grows and diversifies, resources must be provided so that districts can identify, connect with, and employ qualified interpreters in all of the languages needed by members of their communities.

**2. Educational technologies, increasingly common in general education classrooms, remain underused by or unavailable to EL students.**

Bilingual students have not had as many opportunities as their general education peers to take advantage of web-based learning, mobile applications, and other technological tools. However, such access is especially important for EL students in grades 6-12, who face demanding academic challenges as well as English language acquisition and comprehension challenges. As technology makes the world beyond students’ classrooms and communities more and more accessible, it is imperative that technology in the classroom be expanded in order to give EL students the opportunity to learn high-level academic content in a language that they understand while also increasing their English proficiency.

**Evidence:** Teachers can more effectively meet the needs of students by using technology to implement innovative models such as flipped instruction or station rotation, in which EL students can use technology to learn content at their own pace while they receive support from the general education content-area specialist (the teacher) and their classroom peers.<sup>10</sup> WIDA discusses the effectiveness of applying an ecological perspective to discover “...the ways different forms of media, texts, and activity related to each other and fit within a larger network of learning, experience, and interaction” and offers examples of how teachers of EL students can effectively explore how technology tools “...might spark appropriate and intentional linguistic practices.”<sup>11</sup> Rusul Alrubail provides one concrete example, describing how

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<sup>9</sup> Joint Guidance (2015), pp. 38-9.

<sup>10</sup> Tucker, C. (2016).

<sup>11</sup> WIDA (2014), p. 2.

using technology to create a classroom blog “...can tap into students’ and teachers’ utmost communicative potential and help expand and widen learning opportunities.”<sup>12</sup>

The Pew Research Center notes that Latino ownership of smartphones, use of the Internet, and use of social networking sites is similar to, and in some cases, higher than use by non-minority Americans.<sup>13</sup> Mobile phone ownership is increasing at an especially rapid rate among Spanish-dominant Latinos. In addition, Latinos – and young Latinos in particular – are more likely than members of other ethnic groups to use mobile devices as their primary method of accessing the Internet. Robert Lucas and John Willinsky have proposed a framework for using technology to facilitate collaboration among all individuals who work with EL students.<sup>14</sup> They focus on the attributes of a healthy online community and note that community-building factors such as fostering a sense of belonging are often more important than perfecting the technological platform itself.

### **Recommendations:**

- To overcome the lack of ongoing language support in later grades, schools will best serve ELs if they encourage the use of multiple technological pathways to native language instruction in the sciences and advanced mathematics. Materials, lectures, corporate resources, and more are readily available in native language instruction globally in all of the most-frequently presented languages (the top 15, in order, are Spanish, Polish, Arabic, Urdu, Tagalog, Gujarati, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Russian, Korean, French, Assyrian, Hindi, and Telugu).
- We must capitalize on any technology devices that ELs already own. An increasingly wide variety of high-quality educational software and mobile applications have become available to facilitate language development and English acquisition. However, the true power of technology is its ability to empower students to search the world and to create their own learning experiences by seeking out resources in the language with which they are most familiar. As subject matter/content-embedded coursework increases in complexity, our resources to support ELs in their individual areas of interest diminish. Having students use technology to become self-learners may address this challenge. Access to technology can support the integration of EL students' learning, as they increase their English language acquisition and comprehension while mastering complex content.
- Although smartphone usage levels by Spanish-speaking communities in Illinois are among the highest of any cultural group statewide, few EL classrooms use smartphones as an instructional tool. Mobile translation applications, for example, allow students to increase their vocabulary and clarify grammar as they go, giving students the opportunity to

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<sup>12</sup> Alrubail, R. (2015).

<sup>13</sup> Lopez, M. H., et. al. (2013).

<sup>14</sup> Lucas, R., and J. Willinsky (2012).



individualize their own learning and take ownership of their language development. Students at all grade and achievement levels can benefit from intelligent use of today's educational technologies and Internet research.

- Many school districts that have historically had large numbers of EL students have developed strategies and curricula to effectively meet the needs of their EL populations. The Task Force recommends the formation of digital communities of practice that partner schools or districts that have extensive EL experience with districts that are just beginning to serve increasing numbers of ELs.
- As a broader and richer variety of technological materials becomes available, it has become imperative to develop a system for evaluating these materials. A statewide rubric, establishing clear criteria for quality and effectiveness, should be generated, so that educators and districts can make informed decisions about the adoption of new materials and resources. Ideally, this rubric should form the basis of an interactive system in which educators can contribute their impressions of and experiences with materials and technologies.
- Technology should become one of the primary components of family engagement initiatives. Families should be given resources that help them understand the technological materials that students use and should also be given the opportunity to take advantage of those resources for their own needs, when applicable. Technology also facilitates communication between families and administrators, empowering them to express concerns and ask questions. Communities of families often use social media and other technological tools already; schools should discover the location and format of these pre-existing communities to help them engage with families on their own terms and increase opportunities for families to support each other.

**3. Although about a quarter of English Learners transition from ESL and bilingual programs to English-dominant classrooms annually, EL academic performance and scores on standardized tests still frequently lag behind those of their native English peers.**

Native language academic instruction, which buttresses the performance of ELs in elementary grades, declines or disappears in later school years. The Task Force believes this is among the reasons for the lower achievement rates of ELs on standardized tests. Students do achieve transitional English proficiency in early years, and many do well academically thereafter. But many other students are hampered by minimal English skills as they try to cope with the specialized language requirements of advanced coursework. The high dropout rate and lack of ongoing native language support for these students is among the most disturbing problems identified by the Task Force. Many educators, students, and families are concerned that the language acquisition content in ESL and bilingual classrooms is limited in scope and insufficiently tied to content of advanced coursework. Unfortunately, staffing becomes a challenge at the high school level, as it becomes necessary for teachers to possess expertise in specific content areas but also be licensed for EL instruction.

Related to this problem is the tendency to “silo” EL programs from general education, separating EL students both academically and socially from English-dominant peers. As a result, even when EL students keep pace academically, they become socially isolated, interacting only with other ELs. While in EL programs, these students miss opportunities to improve their social communication skills in English. When they transition to general education classes, they are suddenly and often permanently separated from their peer groups.

**Evidence:** In 2013, about 25 percent of EL Grade 3 students met or exceeded academic expectations on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test and the Prairie State Achievement Examination reading tests, compared with 65.1 percent of native English speakers. The reading gap declined slightly for Grades 6 and 7, but by Grade 11, just 4.8 percent of EL students met or exceeded academic expectations. Similar large performance gaps were reported in mathematics.<sup>15</sup>

Caspe et al. note that family engagement support is strong during primary grades, but teachers are not usually trained in methods of engaging the families of middle and high school students, nor held accountable for doing so.<sup>16</sup>

Illinois has already taken steps to facilitate academic achievement for EL students, especially at the secondary level. For example, Illinois has formed a new partnership with the Lead Higher Initiative, which seeks to close equity gaps in high school AP and IB courses.<sup>17</sup>

### **Recommendations:**

- A greater emphasis must be placed on accountability measures that track students longitudinally after they have transitioned from EL programs to general education. EL programs must be evaluated not only in terms of how students perform while enrolled in those programs, but on their success after they have met English proficiency standards. Assessment measures must be developed to track the continual progress of EL students who have transitioned to general education programs; such measures would help schools identify students who need occasional support to ensure their continued academic progress. A matrix of achievement indicators must be developed to help teachers and administrators identify students who require continued EL support. Additional intervention resources must be available to prevent dropouts and aid in former EL students’ transitions to higher education or to the workforce.
- Illinois businesses or other community organizations that employ bilingual or multi-lingual staff are an important resource for providing native language support to EL students studying advanced course content. In particular, we must explore ways to involve bilingual employees with specific expertise in science, technology, engineering,

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<sup>15</sup> Illinois State Board of Education (2015 – 1), pp. 18-22.

<sup>16</sup> Caspe et al. (2011).

<sup>17</sup> Illinois State Board of Education (2016).

and math (STEM) in increasing EL students' interest and confidence in exploring STEM-related content and future employment.

- Language acquisition learning must incorporate advanced content learning, especially in the later school years. Technology resources must be implemented in EL classrooms to facilitate advanced content instruction so that students can achieve academic proficiency while developing their English language skills.
- General education teachers must have a strong understanding of the different cultures of the students and families in their schools to ensure that they provide welcoming, culturally appropriate family engagement opportunities for all students' families. EL teachers must not have the sole or primary responsibility for engagement of EL students' families.
- Parents of EL students must understand that high school graduation is not the end of their children's education. We must provide sufficient information so that parents know what resources are available for their children and families. Schools should serve as a hub for information about available community resources.
- We strongly support Illinois' partnership with the Lead Higher Initiative, which seeks to close equity gaps in high school AP and IB courses. This initiative is likely to have a significant impact on increasing opportunities for ELs to participate in advanced/college-level coursework to fully develop their talents.
- Many EL students, especially at the secondary level, struggle with writing even as their oral proficiency improves. As proficiency in academic writing is correlated with increased academic success across all subject areas, an increased emphasis should be placed on writing-intensive assignments for EL students.
- Retired teachers are an enormous untapped resource. Employed as support staff, these well-prepared and experienced teachers can support EL students in mastering advanced content, inspiring them to stick with subject areas that challenge them while reinforcing the vocabulary they need to understand difficult and specialized content.
- EL programs are often "siloed" away from general education, and EL students often have limited contact with their non-EL peers even outside the classroom. Resources for school-wide projects and recruitment into extracurricular activities should be developed to help schools create opportunities for their EL populations to interact with native English speakers and take leadership roles in their school community.
- EL students often thrive in K-8 dual language programs, but dual language continuity is usually lost at the high school level. High schools must be given the incentive to collaborate with K-8 feeder districts to ensure that students who have succeeded in dual language programs – whether those students are EL or native English speakers – have

opportunities to continue developing their academic literacy in both languages at the high school level.

**4. Innovative approaches for improved English acquisition have been developed in Illinois and elsewhere over the years and can be successful, but those approaches are not implemented as widely or as consistently as they could be.**

Illinois mandates two program models for English Learners: Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) for concentrations of 20 or more ELs who share a native language, and the Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) for enrollments of 19 or fewer students with the same non-English language background. TBE services most often provide academic instruction in native languages while, at the same time, building English language skills for the eventual transition to mainstream classes. TPI services tend to use more flexible approaches in academic instruction in mainstream classrooms – where English is used exclusively – while also offering ESL services for English acquisition.

Within these program models, many schools have found approaches that work, but those approaches are often not communicated beyond individual schools or districts. In addition, these program models pose problems for schools with fluctuating EL populations, as a school formerly operating under a TPI model is faced with the challenge of transitioning to an unfamiliar TBE model when EL enrollment increases.

**Evidence:** A recent innovative approach to support improved language acquisition is ISBE's adoption of the Seal of Biliteracy award that will be added to the transcript of students who have attained "a high level of proficiency, sufficient for meaningful use in college and a career, by a graduating public high school pupil in one or more languages in addition to English."<sup>18</sup> The Seal of Biliteracy is awarded to EL students as well as to native English speakers.

Much research attention has been paid to the limitations of both TBE and TPI. Janet Fuller has presented a concise summary of the issues involved.<sup>19</sup> She points out that it takes an average of six years for students to achieve academic fluency in English, a process that becomes slower when programs focus on transitioning students out of ESL programs rather than on maintaining their literacy in both their native languages and English. She also expresses concern that students who remain in TBE programs for many years only interact in the classroom with other students of their own native language background, limiting their opportunities to develop social vocabulary in English. The Pacific Policy Research Center has reviewed numerous studies on types of bilingual education programs and discovered that programs with elements of language maintenance (ensuring that students retain native language skills) or language enrichment (increasing academic literacy in both English and the student's native language) tend to help students achieve English proficiency more efficiently and thoroughly than programs focused solely on transition to an English-dominant classroom.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Illinois State Board of Education (2014).

<sup>19</sup> Fuller (2011).

<sup>20</sup> Pacific Policy Research Center (2010), p. 3.

## **Recommendations:**

- Frequent dramatic shifts in program design occur in many school districts, based on fluctuating numbers of students from a particular language background. Continuity of instructional approaches must be implemented so that teachers and administrators can focus on a continuum of appropriate services rather than on compliance with arbitrary numerical benchmarks reflected in current Illinois statutes. This may require a new, more flexible and responsive model that integrates components from the TBE and TPI formats.
- The development and spread of promising newer instructional formats must be encouraged and supported in Illinois as evidence for their value grows and as more districts seek ways to help their EL populations increase academic performance and achievement.
- Some districts have developed innovative strategies for serving EL students via a mediated curriculum that integrates technology, community, home, and professional learning support. Methodologies for sharing these strategies with districts that are struggling to serve their EL students need to be developed. Promising methodologies integrate technology with direct teacher contact.
- Professional learning must be expanded from a current emphasis on specific methodologies and practices to a wider focus on collaborative practices. It is especially crucial that professional learning must include general education teachers and community organizations, alongside EL educators, to promote an interdisciplinary approach to supporting EL students. This is likely to require the expanded incorporation of project-based learning and real-life experiences into content area classroom curricula.
- We strongly support ISBE's adoption of the Seal of Biliteracy award that will be added to the transcript of students who have learned English as a new language as well as native English speakers who have achieved proficiency in another language. The Seal of Biliteracy capitalizes on and validates the linguistic assets that many students already bring to Illinois classrooms and will potentially motivate more students to add an important skill set for college and career readiness. Illinois should also reach out to businesses in the community to establish the Seal of Biliteracy as an indicator of career skills.
- A more robust pipeline for culturally and linguistically diverse administrators must be developed. Promising candidates for administration should be identified early, provided

with ample opportunities to acquire the necessary training and credentials, and supported as they adapt to administrative responsibilities.

**5. The student assessment system has not adapted to EL student needs and it does not reflect their patterns of growth and achievement.**

For decades, standardized testing has been the primary method of measuring academic progress for all students and of maintaining accountability. In efforts to provide standardized examinations appropriate for ELs, Illinois has worked with summative assessments of various types over many years, with varying levels of success. Previous and current state-mandated standardized assessments have incorporated modifications and accommodations for EL students, but these adaptations have not been sufficient enough to accurately reflect EL students' academic growth. Because EL students arrive with a range of English and native language academic proficiency, and because different cultural contexts and native languages present different challenges in the academic environment, assessments must become more flexible and responsive to students' needs. Current assessments only serve to reaffirm what we already know: that the majority of EL students do not have enough English proficiency to demonstrate the extent of their knowledge and capabilities when their only assessment options are tests designed with native English speakers in mind.

**Evidence:** A study by the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing concerning problems with EL standardized assessment finds a lack of uniformity among different states' criteria for identifying EL students and assessing their English proficiency. It also identifies a lack of alignment between state standards for language proficiency and the standards delineated in the assessments used by those states.<sup>21</sup> Jamal Abedi and Robert Linqanti, in their investigation into the challenges of assessing EL students, stress the importance of formative rather than summative assessments and provide examples of how to revise language to make assessments more accessible to EL test takers.<sup>22</sup> Alison Bailey and Mikyung Kim Wolf have explored the challenges inherent in assessing EL students' achievement of Common Core Standards and have proposed approaches for improving future assessments.<sup>23</sup> ESSA specifically requires that states accommodate EL students in assessments: A State must assess English learners in a valid and reliable manner that includes ... To the extent practicable, assessments in the language and form most likely to yield accurate and reliable information on what those students know and can do to determine the students' mastery of skills in academic content areas until the students have achieved English language proficiency.<sup>24</sup> Both of the major multi-state assessment consortia, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced, have explored ways of complying with this ESSA mandate. Both provide some native language materials in

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<sup>21</sup> Wolf, M. K., et al. (2010).

<sup>22</sup> Abedi, J., and R. Linqanti (2012).

<sup>23</sup> Bailey, A., and M. K. Wolf (2012).

<sup>24</sup> U. S. Department of Education (2016), p. 16.

mathematics and science, and Smarter Balanced has implemented a “stacked” Spanish version of these exams in which instructions and questions are provided side by side in English and Spanish.<sup>25</sup>

Work by Dina Brulles, head of the gifted program at the Paradise Valley Unified School District in Arizona, shows that the emphasis on summative proficiency assessments leaves schools with no way of identifying EL students who are also academically gifted and talented. As a result, many bright and promising students never receive resources to cultivate their abilities.<sup>26</sup>

### **Recommendations:**

- Summative assessments, while useful for some purposes, do not serve the needs of teachers or students focused on improving EL performance. Instead, a variety of formative assessments must be employed so that instruction, in both English and academic subjects, can be administered to meet each student’s needs. Assessments can include reviews of actual student work, informed teacher observations, and in-depth conversation with parents or caregivers to determine far more information about each student’s home environment, circumstances, health needs, and family and cultural considerations. Assessment must be broad, flexible, innovative, and focused on each student’s particular needs and circumstances.
- The state must investigate the development of assessment structures that enable EL students to demonstrate proficiency in content areas such as mathematics, science, and social studies while also supporting their English language learning. For example, the state might implement “stacked” assessments for math and science that provide EL students with test questions in both English and their native languages. To facilitate stacked assessments and ensure compliance with ESSA regulations, the state should expand its efforts to develop assessments in languages that are widely spoken among EL students within Illinois.
- Many schools rely on language proficiency assessments, especially ACCESS, to gauge EL students' achievement. However, these assessments are not designed to indicate students' overall academic proficiency, nor their achievement in content areas. Increased use of performance task assessments is likely to more precisely identify the potential talents of EL students. These assessments should focus on identifying students' strengths and areas for growth rather than a narrow focus on language acquisition deficits.
- Broader ecological assessments should be used during the screening of students. These assessments must take into account the student’s home environment, health, and developmental learning requirements as well as their English and native language

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<sup>25</sup> ESSA Issue Paper #5a (2016), p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Sanchez (2016).

proficiency to ensure that placements are appropriate and focused on each student's particular needs, goals, and circumstances.

- Efforts must be made to address the assessment needs of EL students who also require accommodations for disabilities. In addition, resources for identifying learning disabilities in EL students must be developed further to ensure that these students are assessed fairly and accurately and to avoid conflating the effects of limited English proficiency with the distinct but overlapping challenges of learning disabilities.
- Oral language profiles should be developed for students entering early childhood programs as well as students entering EL programs later in their academic careers. Maintaining such profiles will help teachers and districts assess students' English language proficiency growth independently of subject area content, cultural context, and additional challenges like learning disabilities. These profiles should be designed and maintained for use within schools and districts to help them guide their own services as a way to balance and personalize statewide assessments.
- Because of the emphasis on summative English proficiency assessments, schools often lack the resources to identify academically gifted EL students. Materials for gifted and talented screening should be adapted so that gifted EL students can be identified early and given the opportunity for accelerated study while still developing English proficiency.

#### **6. The federal government's regulatory approach has changed a number of times.**

The No Child Left Behind framework has been replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act for elementary and secondary education. Similarly, on the state level, Illinois has adopted the Common Core Standards and is a member of the PARCC consortium for student assessment. These shifts have immediate consequences for EL work that, in nearly every case, can be at least partially addressed by expanding collaborative planning and instruction by all educators in a school. This report serves the secondary purpose of providing the Illinois State Board of Education with feedback as it develops its long-range plan to address recent Illinois goals for education reform.

**Evidence:** ESSA contains specific requirements for EL education, particularly in terms of assessment. The National Conference of State Legislatures summarizes the new requirements as follows:

States must also show in their plan that they have adopted English language proficiency standards. English language proficiency standards must be derived from four domains (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), address the different proficiency levels of English learners, and be aligned with the challenging state academic standards.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> 27 NCSL (2016), p. 2.



The goal is to standardize assessment procedures nationwide so that all states evaluate their EL students on similar terms while still providing some room for states to adapt assessments to the needs of their respective populations.

Overall, ESSA increases funding for EL instruction, calling for the allocation of \$756 million in FY 2017 and a gradual rise to \$885 million by 2020.<sup>28</sup> It separates funding for all assessment – including EL assessment – into Title I, while funding other components of EL education through Title III. ESSA has earmarked funding for some programs that will be especially beneficial to EL students, most notably \$250 million in Title IX funding for preschool programs, with the development of early childhood dual language programs as one of the major priorities.<sup>29</sup>

Ideally, this will enable schools to provide dual language support as early as possible and to differentiate dual language students from EL students. ESSA also contains more specific Title I language regarding the education and assessment of migratory children, many of whom are also ELs.

### **Recommendations:**

- An intense effort should be initiated to identify all fiscal resources that may be available to enhance teaching and learning of EL students, as ESSA explicitly requires. Illinois must develop a comprehensive plan that aligns these resources into a coordinated effort to address many of the recommendations in the present report. The area of assessment presents particular challenges on this front, as resources for assessment are now provided under Title I for all students, including ELs.
- Use the Illinois State Board of Education's four questions for stakeholders as guidelines for shaping and implementing EL policy. Consider all proposed initiatives and uses of funding in terms of: 1) improvement of student achievement, 2) coordination of services to schools and districts, 3) improvement of programs and services, and 4) opportunities to support students in Illinois.
- As ESSA regulations have made the requirements for EL support more specific and rigorous, school and district administrators must become more informed so that they can communicate the regulations to teachers and verify that their schools comply with federally mandated practices. Guidance should be provided to administrators, not only in the nature of the requirements, but in how to support teachers in meeting federal standards and in how to adapt the requirements to the needs of their schools' unique EL communities. This guidance can be achieved through clear documentation as well as through professional learning opportunities.

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<sup>28</sup> 28 NCSL (2016), p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> 29 Weyer et al. (2016), p. 2.

## **7. Endorsements for bilingual and ESL educators and administrators have not kept up with the research about English acquisition and student needs.**

Requirements for bilingual and ESL educator endorsements do not reflect updated research on language acquisition, comprehension, and EL student support in general education classrooms. As the EL population grows, all teachers and administrators need some knowledge about second language acquisition, and professional learning opportunities are not always available even when educators desire them.

The recent Illinois School Leadership Advisory Council Report highlights the importance of expanding leadership opportunities in order to increase the number of administrators who are culturally and linguistically diverse.<sup>30</sup> The experience and expertise of these administrators can help districts and schools keep their approaches current and sensitive to students' needs. Conferences and workshops focusing on English language learning are often promoted exclusively to teachers who specialize in that area, with general education teachers and administrators either uninformed about their existence or discouraged from perceiving these events as valuable opportunities for professional learning and collaboration. Likewise, many EL teachers assume that general education conferences and workshops do not contain information or professional connections that apply to them.

**Evidence:** This is apparent in the Task Force review of professional learning requirements and courses for EL endorsements, and in its understanding of training for mainstream teachers who nonetheless must serve the needs of ELs in their classes.

Micro-credentials, which provide evidence of continued professional learning, have emerged as a method of holding teachers and administrators accountable for expanding their knowledge and skill sets. Numerous major universities, including Northwestern University in Illinois, now offer "a la carte" courses relevant to educators, the successful completion of which allows them to display a digital credential.<sup>31</sup> EDUCAUSE praises micro-credentialing as a way to increase personalization, collaboration, accessibility, and interoperability in educators' professional learning, while also providing opportunities for schools, districts, and the state to assess and analyze educators' professional learning accomplishments.<sup>32</sup>

### **Recommendations:**

- The Task Force believes that Illinois' professional learning requirements and expectations for ESL and bilingual instructors may require substantial changes. At the same time, however, larger numbers of mainstream teachers and administrators are also serving ELs, but lack the necessary training to be effective in that role. The Task Force suggests that the state consider a micro-credentialing opportunity for mainstream educators, providing a specific curriculum in how best to understand and work with EL

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<sup>30</sup> ISLAC (2016).

<sup>31</sup> Fain (2015).

<sup>32</sup> Brown et al. (2015), p. 4.

students and their families in mainstream classroom environments. This micro-credential would require minimal coursework and maximum flexibility to encourage participation.

- In addition to developing this new credential, the Task Force believes that the state should develop incentives for multilingual non-educators to work with schools on a select or project basis to provide “real world” native language access to STEM subjects and careers. Such community partnerships would make it easier for EL students to access complex content, develop long-term career goals, and recognize the professional value of multilingual skills.
- As the emphasis on technology tools increases, the licensing sequence for new teachers must be re-examined. Preservice teachers – those who plan to work primarily with EL students, as well as general education teachers – must learn how to harness the power of technology to support student learning of complex content, especially STEM-related content.
- There is a persistent shortage of qualified teachers either specializing in bilingual education or possessing the tools to teach EL students effectively in a general education environment. An expedited pathway to bilingual education certification should be developed to encourage both pre-certification candidates and experienced teachers to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to work with the EL population.
- Existing professional learning organizations must be engaged so that preparation programs can be redesigned in light of current approaches to English language learning. For education of new teachers, collaboration with Institutions of Higher Education is necessary. For re-licensure and ongoing professional learning, Administrator Academy and Illinois Principals’ Association should assume a similar role.
- Efforts should be made to integrate EL-relevant material throughout general education professional learning events organized by groups such as the Illinois Computing Educators, Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and Illinois Reading Council. Likewise, opportunities for general education teachers and administrators to participate in EL-focused events must be increased. The EL community must collaborate with professional organizations like those listed above to advocate for the needs of EL students.
- Interactions with the families of EL students require well-qualified, credentialed interpreters who are not only bilingual but understand specific, relevant vocabulary and the ethical role of an interpreter. Interpreters must be provided for one-on-one conferences, small-group meetings such as Individualized Education Program discussions, and public events such as local school board meetings.

## Summary and Conclusion

Many of the above recommendations overlap and many embrace the idea of expanded collaboration among educators -- and among schools and the resources of their communities -- to meet the needs of individual EL students. The Task Force seeks to challenge the idea that English language learning is or should be a siloed activity separate from the other services provided by a school or district. Instead, while some teachers and administrators will always take the lead in addressing the needs of EL students, those needs should also become a part of the planning and execution of all school objectives in all grades and subjects.

One of the goals of this report is to provide input for the State Plan and respond to the stakeholder questions posed by the Illinois State Board of Education:

- What do you want to see in a State Plan to improve student achievement?
- What do you want to see in a State Plan to improve coordinated services to schools and districts?
- What do you want to see in a State Plan to improve programs and services?
- What other opportunities are provided in ESSA to support students in Illinois?

The Task Force believes that the seven major issues it has identified, along with its recommendations for each, provide a framework for a State Plan that will address the above questions. Such a State Plan would address the demographic changes in Illinois, the need for increased access to technology, the achievement gap between EL students and their native English speaking peers, the promotion of successful program models and educational approaches, meaningful and accessible methods of assessment, implementation of federal funding and requirements under ESSA, and improved credentialing and endorsement of educators.

The long-term trend toward larger enrollments of non-English speaking students will continue to have an important impact on all schools and almost all classrooms. Educators who do not consider the unique needs of ELs or prepare for their entry into their classrooms are likely to find the challenges of serving linguistically and culturally diverse students overwhelming, to the detriment of students, teachers, administrators, and families. Nonetheless, Illinois has access to a wealth of resources – materials, information, organizations, and individuals – that can facilitate the continuation of Illinois' longstanding commitment to excellence in EL education. By taking advantage of these resources and collaborating toward innovation, Illinois will continue to lead the nation in the educational services it provides for its growing EL population.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **House Joint Resolution 36**

#### **Bilingual Advisory Task Force Members**

##### **Co-Chairs**

Dr. Carmen Ayala Superintendent Berwyn North School District 98

Dr. Ronald Perlman President The Center: Resources for  
Teaching and Learning

##### **Members**

Mr. Nelson Aguiar Associate Director for Illinois Community College Board  
ESL & Immigrant Issues

Representative Illinois State Representative Illinois General Assembly  
Linda Chapa LaVia

Ms. Carla Marie Cruise ELL Director/Bilingual Teacher Collinsville CUSD 10

Mr. Robert F. de Oliveira Assistant Principal Kankakee HS District 111

Mr. David Del Poso Martin ELL Teacher Peoria School District 150

Ms. Colleen Doyle-Parrott Director of Curriculum, Carbondale Elementary  
Instruction and Assessment School District 95

Representative Mike Fortner Illinois State Representative Illinois General Assembly

Ms. Karen Garibay-Mulattieri Chief Officer of Language Chicago Public Schools 299  
and Cultural Education

Dr. David Gonzalez Nieto Division Administrator Division of English Language Learning,  
Illinois State Board of Education

Ms. Denise M. Hamby Middle School ESL Teacher Beardstown Community Unit School  
District 15

Mr. Okab T. Hassan Principal Chicago Public Schools 299

Mr. Jason Leahy Executive Director Illinois Principals Association

Dr. Matthew K. Moreland Principal Aptakisic-Tripp School District 102

Dr. Michael Popp Superintendent Aurora East School District 131