



FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA Dual Language Learner

PILOT STUDY



Research Brief: Professional Development to Support Teachers of Young Dual Language Learners in California

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Introduction

Dual language learners (DLLs), or children who are learning another language in addition to English, make up approximately 60% of children under age 5 in California.¹ Given this large population, it is critical that educators in the state's early learning and care system are prepared to support DLLs' learning and development. Both the state's *Master Plan for Early Learning and Care* and the *DLL Policy Platform* proposed by Early Edge California and Advancement Project California acknowledge this need, highlighting the need for additional supports for early educators in California to strengthen their capacity to support DLLs' learning and effectively engage with their families.^{2,3}

Are early learning and care programs adequately staffed with qualified educators? To what extent are staff required to, and provided supports that enable them to, participate in professional development (PD) opportunities that support the learning and growth of DLLs? Addressing these two questions is the focus of this research brief from the First 5 CA DLL Pilot Study.

Through a survey of 744 administrators from a representative sample⁴ of licensed early learning centers and family child care homes (FCCHs) across California, we examine how many early educators are required

¹ Holtby, S., Lordi, N., Park, R., & Ponce, N. (2017). *Families with young children in California: Findings from the California Health Interview Survey, 2011–2014, by geography and home language* [health policy brief]. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. Retrieved from https://www.ccfca.gov/pdf/whatwedo/whatwewknow/Child_PB_FINAL_5-31-17.pdf

² Alcalá, L., Kubinec, J., Atkin, C., Karoly, L., King, C., Muenchow, S., & Stipeck, D. (2020). *Master plan for early learning and care: Making California for all kids*. WestEd. <https://chhs-data-prod.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2020/12/01104743/Master-Plan-for-Early-Learning-and-Care-Making-California-For-All-Kids-FINAL.pdf>

³ Zepeda, M., Crolotte, C., Doh, J., & Ramos Harris, V. (2020). *The dual language learner policy platform: Informing California's early learning and care policies and investments in 2020–21 and beyond*. Early Edge California and Advancement Project California. <https://earlyedgecalifornia.org/the-dual-language-learner-policy-platform/>

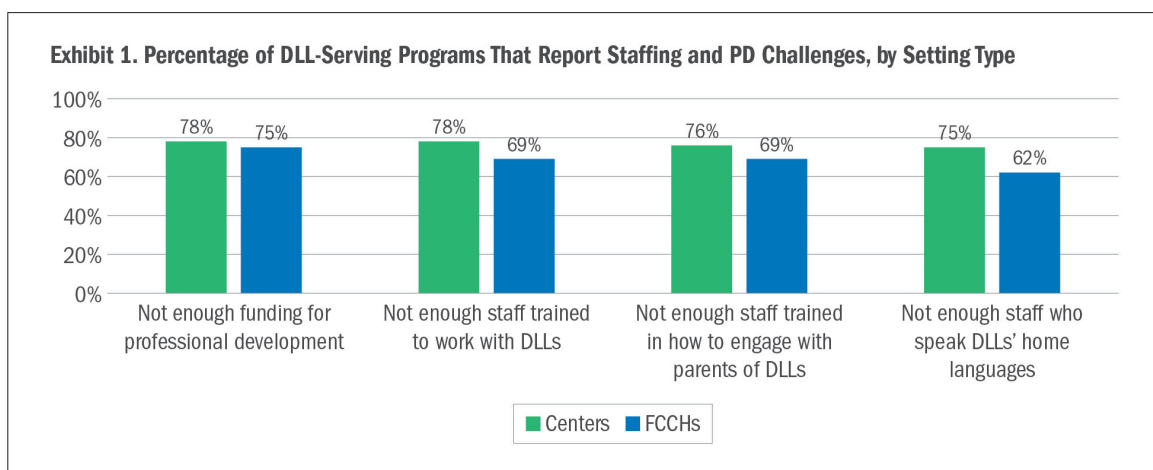
⁴ Overall the response rate was 74%. In total, 744 programs responded to the survey, including 476 centers and 268 FCCHs. Statistical adjustments were made to ensure the sample reflects the population of early learning programs in California. The survey was administered online or by phone in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Russian.

to participate in PD related to supporting DLLs, the characteristics of that PD, and the supports offered to facilitate and encourage participation. This brief focuses on the 98% of centers and 70% of FCCHs that serve at least one DLL, and describes the PD requirements and supports at those sites.

Overall, we find that the early learning workforce is underprepared to support DLLs, and opportunities and requirements for PD focused on supporting young DLLs vary substantially across the state, depending on program characteristics. In particular, survey results indicate that staff in publicly funded programs such as Head Start and State Preschool programs are more likely to be required to participate in DLL-focused PD than those in programs that receive other types of funding, as are staff in programs that participate in their local Quality Counts California initiative. And while most centers are able to offer some supports for staff to participate in these PD opportunities (such as paid time off or providing a substitute for their classroom), fewer family child care providers have access to these resources. Understanding these requirements and supports is critical, because they impact early educators' access to opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and classroom practices to support DLLs' learning and development.

What are programs' needs for staff development to better support DLLs?

Early learning and care programs face a shortage of educators who are prepared to work with DLLs and their families. As shown in Exhibit 1, more than three quarters of center directors (78%) and more than two thirds (69%) of FCCHs said that they did not have enough early educators who are trained to work specifically with DLLs. A similar percentage of center directors said that their teachers lacked training on how to engage with parents of DLLs (76%) or skills to speak the home language of the DLLs enrolled at their site (75%). Moreover, access to PD to strengthen the workforce was limited. Three out of four center directors (78%) and FCCH providers (75%) reported that there was not enough funding available for PD. These results are a clear indication that more PD (and more funding to support PD) is needed to ensure a workforce qualified to support DLL learning.



WHAT IS THE LANDSCAPE OF DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN CALIFORNIA?

One of the goals of the First 5 California DLL Pilot Study is to understand the landscape of dual language learners (DLLs) in early learning and care programs in the state, including the extent to which different languages are spoken at different types of sites. The following are some of the key takeaways from the program director survey conducted as part of the DLL Pilot Study.

Nearly all centers and the majority of family child care homes in California serve DLLs. Across California, 98% of licensed center-based programs and 70% of licensed family child care homes (FCCHs) enrolled at least one DLL in 2019.

DLLs are served in linguistically diverse settings. In 70% of early learning and care programs serving DLLs, more than 30% of enrolled children were DLLs. More than a third (38%) of programs served DLLs that spoke only Spanish. But in many early learning programs, multiple languages were represented among the children served. Thirty-four percent of DLL-serving programs had three or more languages represented at the site (57% of centers and 17% of FCCHs). Spanish speakers were the most common, present at 87% of DLL-serving programs, followed by Mandarin (24% of sites) and Filipino speakers (19%).

FCCHs tend to have greater percentages of DLLs than centers. Percentages of DLLs varied by type of setting. FCCHs tended to have a larger concentration of DLLs than centers; on average, about 80% of the children enrolled in FCCHs were DLLs, compared to 54% in centers.

Directors of early learning and care programs serving DLLs reported incorporating home language in different ways and to varying degrees. Some programs used intentional dual language models, while others' approaches were more informal. However, directors from at least a quarter of sites (29% of centers and 25% of FCCHs) that served DLLs reported that they used English-only instruction with children.

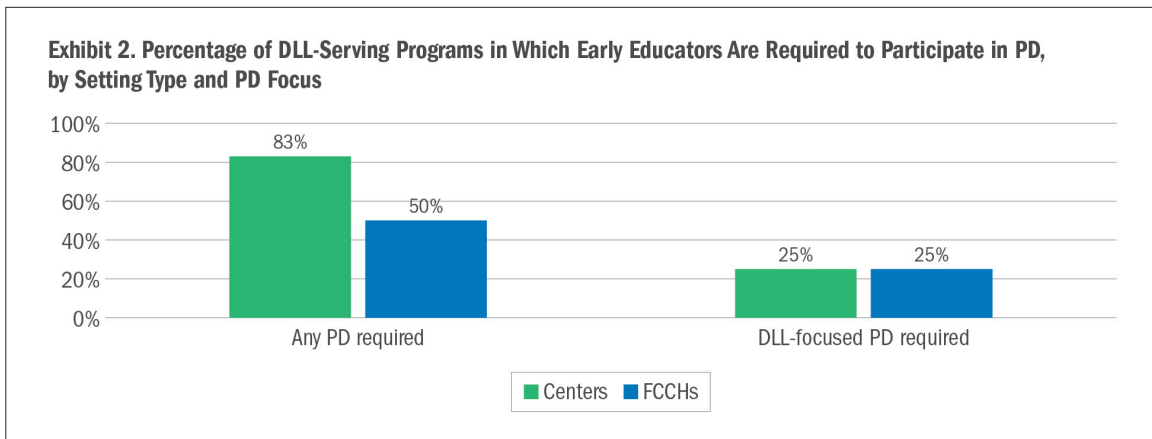
How common is it for PD focused on DLLs to be required of early educators?

Early educators are rarely required to attend PD specifically focused on supporting DLLs. In 83% of centers, at least some of the educators or caregivers were required to participate in PD activities within the past year. However, as shown in Exhibit 2, in only 25% of centers were early educators required to participate in PD specifically focused on teaching and supporting DLLs.⁵

Compared with staff in centers, fewer FCCH staff are required to participate in PD overall; however, the same proportion of centers and FCCHs have early educators who are required to attend DLL-focused PD. PD requirements for educators or caregivers working in FCCHs may come from the FCCH owner, initiatives, or programs in which the FCCH participates (such as a quality rating and improvement system, or QRIS),

⁵ Note that requirements for staff to participate in PD could come directly from the site director, or from an external source such as a county QRIS initiative. On the survey, site directors were asked, "In the past year, were educators/caregivers in this program required to participate in professional development focused specifically on supporting DLLs?"

or the FCCH's funding stream(s). Unlike centers, which often have multiple staff, FCCHs may only have one early educator, who is also the owner of the program. Acknowledging this context, only 50% of FCCH providers reported that they (or any other early educators at the site) were required to attend any PD. However, 25% of all FCCHs reported that they and/or any other early educators at the site were required to complete PD focused on DLLs—the same proportion as in centers. This suggests that even though FCCHs have fewer PD requirements overall, the emphasis of the PD is more likely to be on supporting DLLs.



It is worth noting that not all providers have opportunities to participate in PD focused on supporting DLLs. Most of the PD opportunities available to providers in the state do not focus specifically on supporting DLLs. California's guidelines for teaching early childhood education at community colleges (California Early Childhood Educator Competencies) recommend embedding guidance on supporting DLLs in core courses—and many courses do include a lecture or some information on teaching DLLs.⁶ However, community colleges typically do not offer classes that focus solely on how to support DLLs.⁷

Other sources of PD for early learning and care providers cover a variety of topics but are also rarely focused *specifically* on serving DLLs. For example, the California Preschool Instructional Network (CPIN) provides workshops throughout the state on teaching and learning strategies that are age and developmentally appropriate and that highlight inclusive practices and support for all children, but few of the workshops focus solely on how to teach and support DLLs.

Sometimes [one of our PD providers] will come and talk about dual language learning. I don't think we've really found anything that dives really deep. Nothing really deep. ... Nothing real meaty.
– Center director

The availability of PD focused on DLLs has increased in recent years, at least in some regions. For example, in recognition of these limited DLL-focused PD opportunities, in 2018, the California Department of Education

⁶ California Department of Education. (2011). *California early childhood educator competencies*. Sacramento, CA: Author. Retrieved from: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/ececomps.asp>

⁷ EdSource. (2016). *Promoting success for Dual Language Learners: The essential role of early childhood education programs*. Retrieved from: <https://edsources.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Promoting-Success-For-Dual-Language-Learners-2016.pdf>

(CDE) awarded grants to educational institutions and PD providers to offer training on specific models, such as Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) and Preschool GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design); and in various areas, such as biliteracy development, multilingual settings, and second language acquisition and learning.^{8,9} However, these DLL PD grants from CDE were concentrated in a few regions of the state, leaving some regions, such as those in the northernmost part of the state, without these resources. Consistently, interviews with county stakeholders across the state earlier in the DLL Pilot Study revealed varying levels of access around the state to PD specifically focused on teaching DLLs.¹⁰ These limited opportunities for DLL-focused PD may help explain the low percentages of early learning programs in which such PD is required of their early educators—and point to the need for expansion of these opportunities throughout the state.

What factors drive requirements for DLL-focused PD?

Early educators in Head Start/Early Head Start and Title 5 programs are more likely to be required to participate in DLL-focused PD than early educators in programs that do not receive these public funds.

Early learning programs that received either federal Head Start/Early Head Start funding or state Title 5 funding (e.g., the California State Preschool Program or the General Child Care Program) were more likely to report requirements for their staff to participate in DLL-focused PD compared to programs that were not publicly funded (Exhibit 3). Specifically, early educators in 64% of centers and 51% of FCCHs that received Head Start or Early Head Start funding were required to participate in DLL-focused PD. In addition, 41% of centers receiving Title 5 funding (which represent approximately 38% of DLL-serving centers) had early educators who were required to participate in DLL-focused PD. Even more strikingly, staff in 73% of FCCHs that received Title 5 funding were required to do so. In contrast, only 13% of centers and of FCCHs that received no public funding had early educators who were required to participate in DLL-focused PD.

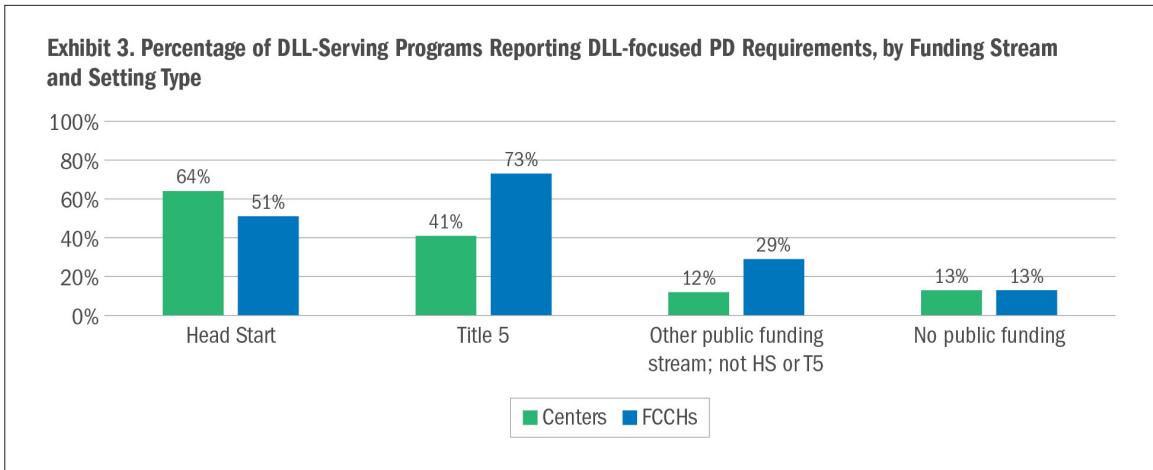
These differences may reflect a greater investment in PD for these publicly funded programs rather than explicit guidance about PD on DLL learning. Head Start, for example, requires a minimum of 15 hours of annual PD for educators, and although Head Start programs are not explicitly required to provide PD specifically focused on supporting DLLs, training on how to support DLLs is included among the list of topics recommended for PD.¹¹ Similarly, the California State Preschool Program does not require early educators to participate in PD aimed at supporting DLLs. And, in fact, most Head Start and Early Head Start programs (99% of centers; 61% of FCCHs) and Title 5 programs (92% of centers; 87% of FCCHs) reported that their early educators were required to participate in some form of PD each year.

⁸ Early Edge. (2019). *DLL professional development funding*. Retrieved from: <https://earlyedgecalifornia.org/dll-professional-development-funding-2018/#>

⁹ California Department of Education, (2019). *FY 2018-19 Dual language learners professional development grant*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/profile.asp?id=5276>

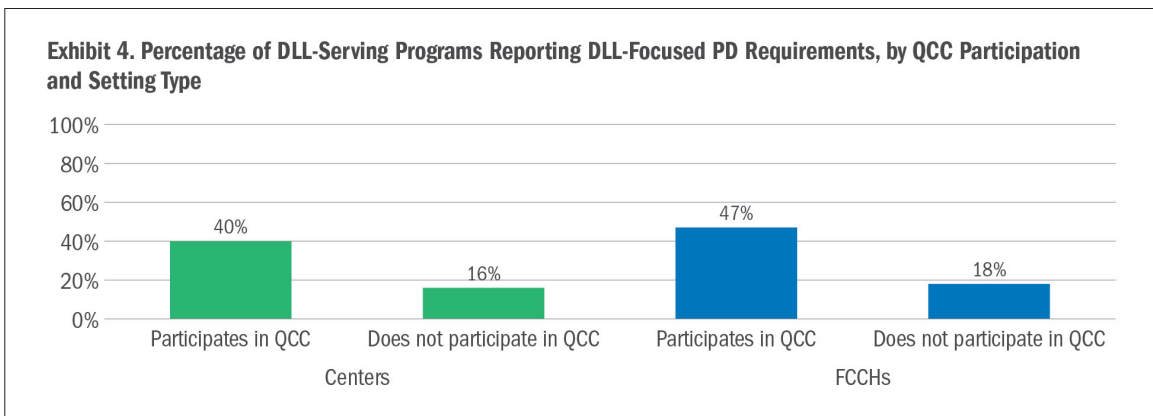
¹⁰ Bergey, R., Quick, H., Anthony, J., Manship, K., White, L., Handjojo, C., Hauser, A., & Keuter, S. (2019). *The early learning and care context for dual language learners in California*. American Institutes for Research. Retrieved from: <https://californiadllstudy.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/F5CA-DLL%20-1st%20Brief%20-The%20Early%20Learning%20and%20Care%20Context%20for%20DLL%20in%20CA.pdf>

¹¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Administration for Children and Families (n.d.). *Head Start policy and regulations: 1302.92 Training and professional development*. Retrieved from <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/hspps-final.pdf>



Note: Programs can have multiple funding sources. Among DLL-serving programs, 18% of centers and 12% of FCCHs receive Head Start or Early Head Start funds; 38% of centers and 12% of FCCHs receive Title 5 funds; 16% of centers and 19% of FCCHs receive other public funding (but do not receive Head Start or Title 5 funds); and 42% of centers and 63% of FCCHs do not receive any public funds.

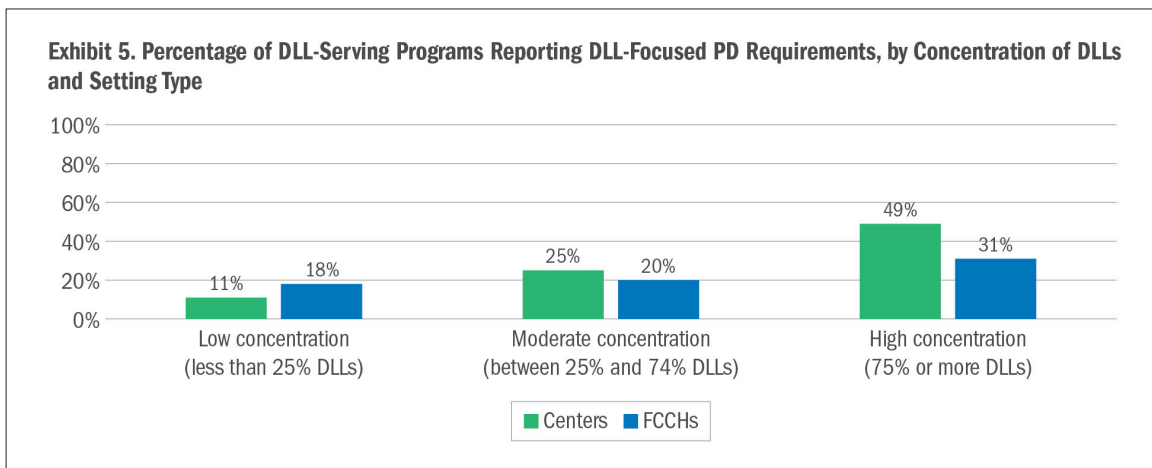
Early learning and care programs participating in Quality Counts California are significantly more likely to have staff who are required to engage in DLL-focused PD than those that are not participating. More than a third (38%) of centers and one-fifth (22%) of FCCHs participated in their local Quality Counts California (QCC) program, the state’s QRIS. As shown in Exhibit 4, centers participating in QCC were significantly more likely to have staff required to participate in PD focused on DLLs (40%) than those not participating in QCC (16%). A similar trend is seen for FCCHs, with 47% of QCC participants requiring DLL-focused PD for their early educators, compared to 18% of non-QCC participants. However, it is important to note that there is an overlap between QCC participation and funding stream, with the majority of programs participating in QCC also receiving Title 5 and/or Head Start funding.¹² And the relationship between QCC participation and PD requirements appears to be largely explained by receipt of these funding sources. However, the QCC program could be used as a lever to further incentivize participation in DLL-focused PD, and we know that currently there is some variation by county in QCC requirements that may emphasize the need for DLL-focused PD.



Note: 38% of centers and 22% of FCCHs participate in QCC.

¹² 75% of DLL-serving programs that receive Head Start funds participate in QCC, and 69% of DLL-serving programs that receive Title 5 funds participate in QCC.

Programs serving a larger proportion of DLLs are more likely to require DLL-focused PD. Early educators in programs with higher concentrations of DLLs (75% or more DLLs) were more likely to be required to participate in DLL-focused PD than early educators in programs with low concentrations of DLLs (less than 25% DLLs). Specifically, among those with high concentrations of DLLs, nearly half (47%) of centers and two thirds (65%) of FCCHs had staff who were required to participate in DLL-focused PD. However, early educators in only 15% of centers and 19% of FCCHs with low concentrations of DLLs were required to participate in DLL-focused PD. Though this pattern may seem logical, classrooms with high concentrations of DLLs present different challenges and opportunities for educators from those with low concentrations, but DLLs in all classrooms need specialized instruction, and thus supports for educators should be universally available and encouraged.



Note: 39% of centers and 17% of FCCHs have a low concentration of DLLs; 38% of centers and 42% of FCCHs have a moderate concentration of DLLs; and 23% of centers and 41% of FCCHs have a high concentration of DLLs.

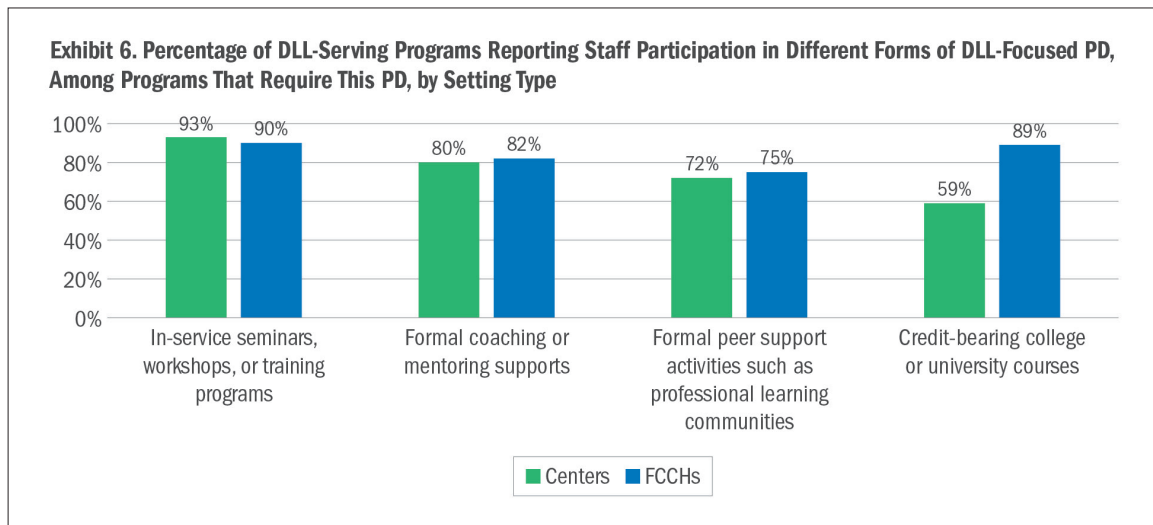
How is DLL-focused PD provided?

Nearly all programs with DLL-focused PD requirements reported their staff received this PD through in-service seminars, workshops, or training programs. PD focused on supporting DLLs can be offered through various modalities, but in-service seminars, workshops, or training programs were reported most frequently—by 93% of center directors and 90% of FCCHs (Exhibit 6). Formal coaching or mentoring supports was another common format for this type of PD, reported by 80% of centers and 82% of FCCHs. Coaching and mentoring have been found to be effective approaches to PD,¹³ especially intensive or sustained coaching,¹⁴ so the number of centers reporting coaching or mentoring is encouraging. Programs also reported that some of their staff completed DLL-focused PD through peer support activities (72% of centers and 75% of FCCHs). However, there is a striking difference in the proportion of programs that had

¹³ Neuman, S. B., & Cunningham, L. (2009). The impact of professional development and coaching on early language and literacy instructional practices. *American Educational Research Journal*, 46(2), 532-566. Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0002831208328088>

¹⁴ Quick et al. (2016). *Independent evaluation of California's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Quality Rating and Improvement System: Cumulative technical report*. San Mateo, CA: American Institutes for Research. Retrieved from: <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/RTT-ELC%20QRIS%20Cumulative%20Technical%20Report%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

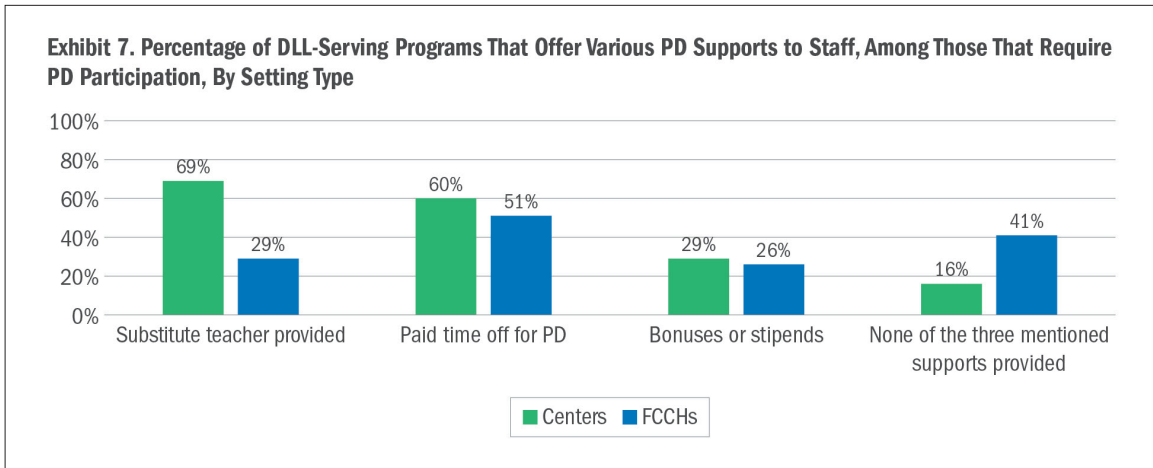
staff completing DLL-focused PD requirements through credit-bearing college courses: 89% of FCCHs reported staff taking college courses, compared to only 59% of centers. So while college coursework varies by type of setting, in-service seminars, workshops, training programs, and formal coaching or mentoring supports were frequently used modalities of PD, regardless of setting.



What supports do early learning programs provide to facilitate participation in PD?

The majority of centers where early educators are required to engage in PD provide necessary supports to enable them to participate in those opportunities. Some supports, such as a substitute to cover the classroom while an early educator attends a training during program hours, are necessary for them to attend; other supports provide important incentives to encourage participation. Two thirds (69%) of centers in which some PD is required of early educators reported that their early educators were provided with a substitute teacher, and 60% of these centers offered paid time off for PD. A smaller percentage (29%) reported that a bonus or stipend was provided to educators for their participation in PD. However, a small percentage of centers (16%) that require PD reported that their early educators were offered none of these supports, which, for these programs’ staff, may make participating in needed (and required) PD challenging or impossible.

Fewer supports are offered for early educators in FCCHs to pursue PD. Given the different structure of FCCHs, which often have a sole operator who may not be able to afford to hire a substitute while she or he takes a staff development day, it is not surprising that only 29% of FCCHs that had PD requirements reported that this was a support available to their program’s early educators. About half (51%) of FCCHs that reported a requirement for early educators to participate in any PD covered early educators’ time to attend PD, and only 26% provided stipends or bonuses for having completed such training. Overall, 41% of FCCHs that reported some PD requirements for themselves or their staff indicated that none of these three supports (i.e., substitutes, paid training time, or stipends/bonuses) were available to them. The absence of resources and incentives for these caregivers and educators likely inhibits their continued professional learning.



WHAT SUPPORTS DID PROGRAMS RECEIVE TO SUPPORT CHILDREN’S LEARNING DURING COVID-19?

Through a supplemental state representative survey administered in June and July of 2020, program administrators were asked whether their staff had received various supports or resources to help their program support children’s learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁵

Nearly two thirds (63%) of program directors reported that they or their staff received some type of online training during the COVID-related disruptions. Center staff were more likely to have participated in these online opportunities than staff at FCCHs; 71% of centers and 58% of FCCHs reported receiving supports or resources.

Professional learning through online discussion groups was the most common PD format during the COVID-19 disruptions. Almost half (48%) of all programs reported their staff participating in online discussion groups or professional learning communities to support their instructional practice. Many (42%) also reported receiving ideas and resources they could use for distance learning, though fewer FCCH providers (25%) reported receiving such resources. Fewer than a quarter (22%) of programs reported having received guidance or resources to support DLLs during the closures.

¹⁵ Quick, H., White, L., Brodziak de los Reyes, I., Bergey, R., & Carbuca-Abbott, M. (2020). *A system in jeopardy: California’s early learning system and its dual language learners during the COVID-19 pandemic*. American Institutes for Research. Retrieved from <https://www.air.org/covid-early-learning>

Conclusions and Recommendations

Although DLLs make up a majority of children under age 5 in California, there is work to be done to ensure that early educators and caregivers have the knowledge and skills needed to fully support DLLs' learning. Results from the DLL Pilot Study's statewide survey of early learning program administrators underscore the need to shore up system supports for professional learning and development in several ways.

- **Enhancing investments in training opportunities for educators working with DLLs is critical to ensuring a qualified workforce that can support these youngest learners.** According to director reports of their challenges, the early learning workforce is underprepared to support DLLs' learning, and additional resources for PD are needed. The majority of site directors reported that there were not enough teachers trained to work directly with DLLs or their families. And three quarters of early learning program administrators reported that a lack of funding for PD is a challenge for their program. The state's recent investments in PD opportunities for early educators have been a step in the right direction; however, more support across the state is needed.
- **Requirements for participating in PD should include offerings with an emphasis on supporting the learning of DLLs.** Although early educators in the majority of early learning programs were required to participate in PD each year, only a quarter of program directors reported that their staff were required to participate in PD focused specifically on supporting DLLs. Given the large numbers of DLLs being served in early learning programs across the state, all educators should have the knowledge and skills required to effectively support the learning of this population. New provisions for DLL-focused PD should be embedded in publicly funded program requirements, and systems like Quality Counts California could be used to incentivize programs to engage their staff with these opportunities.
- **Adequate supports and incentives are needed to ensure that early educators in all programs can take advantage of DLL-focused PD opportunities.** Supports for staff, such as paid time off or substitutes to step in for educators and caregivers while they attend PD, can be critical in ensuring that staff can invest in their professional learning. Stipends can also help to offset costs and incentivize staff to participate in such PD. While the majority of centers that required any PD offered such critical supports as paid time off or substitutes, the percentages of family child care homes that offered either of these supports were far lower. All early learning programs should have access to the resources needed to provide these supports.

As the state recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic and the early learning and care system rebuilds, it will be critical to continue to invest in the skills of educators who support the large population of our state's young DLLs. Several strategies, such as embedding requirements for participation in DLL-focused PD in publicly funded programs, encouraging non-publicly funded programs to require such PD, or increasing access to this PD, could help bolster these skills and in turn help to support DLLs' learning and development across the state.

Our findings underscore recent policy recommendations for investment in training opportunities for educators working with DLLs¹⁶ and priorities advocated by the state’s new *Master Plan for Early Learning and Care*.¹⁷ The master plan recommends supports to allow providers to further develop a “specific understanding of responsive interactions, dual language development, and best instructional practices for serving DLLs” and that these requirements be made a part of standards for licensure and the Child Development Permit. The plan also notes that other incentives and supports for providers and programs, such as grants and targeted technical assistance, will be critical going forward. These steps will help to ensure a qualified workforce to support California’s diverse young learners.

¹⁶ Alliance for a Better Community and Advisory Board for the Consortium for English Learner Success. (2020). *2020–2021 policy agenda*. http://www.afabc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/EL_2020_Policy_Agenda.pdf

¹⁷ Alcalá, L., Kubinec, J., Atkin, C., Karoly, L., King, C., Muenchow, S., & Stipeck, D. (2020). *Master plan for early learning and care: Making California for all kids*. WestEd. <https://chhs-data-prod.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2020/12/01104743/Master-Plan-for-Early-Learning-and-Care-Making-California-For-All-Kids-FINAL.pdf>

About the First 5 California DLL Pilot Study

In 2015, First 5 California committed \$20 million for the DLL Pilot Study to support effective and scalable strategies in early learning and care programs to promote learning and development for DLLs and their families. A key component of this overall initiative seeks to describe and evaluate the range of strategies to support DLLs, including three strategies of particular interest: instructional practices, PD for early educators, and family engagement. The study is examining the range of practices, by age, setting type, and diverse language groups, and how various practices are supportive of child and family outcomes. The study includes 16 counties selected to be broadly representative of the state's DLL population: Butte, Calaveras, Contra Costa, Fresno, Los Angeles, Monterey, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Sonoma, Stanislaus, and Yolo. The study is being conducted by AIR and its partners at Juárez & Associates; CRI; School Readiness Consulting; Allen, Shea & Associates; and Stanfield Systems, Inc.; with guidance from the DLL Input Group, which comprises stakeholders, advocates, and state and national experts on DLLs.

For more information about the study and to read other study briefs and reports:

<https://californiadllstudy.org/>

www.cafc.ca.gov/

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