



Expanding the Bilingual Certified Teacher Workforce Can Extend Secondary Dual Language Programs

IDRA Testimony for HB 3303, submitted by Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., to the Texas House Public Education Committee, April 18, 2023

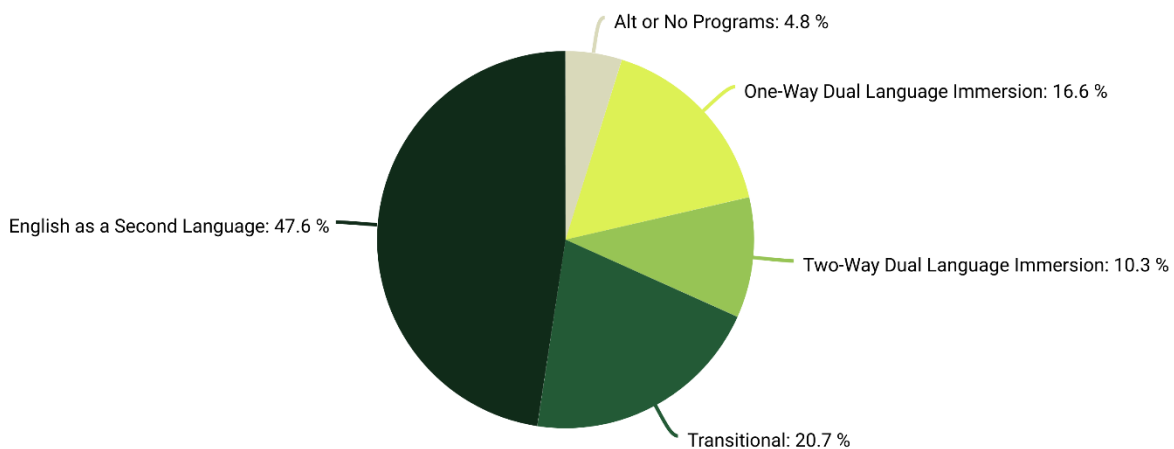
Dear Chair Buckley and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Chloe Latham Sikes, and I am deputy director of policy at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

IDRA supports HB 3303 as it both **addresses the Texas teacher shortage** in certified bilingual/ESL education, and **advances state goals to expand dual language immersion (DLI) programs**, as articulated by HB 3 (86R), SB 560 (87R), and the resulting SB 560 State Plan for Emergent Bilingual Students from TEA.

Texas public schools serve 1.1 million emergent bilingual students. Most emergent bilingual students, about 62%, are in prekindergarten through fifth grade. About two-thirds receive bilingual education, with a growing proportion in dual language immersion one-way and two-way programs (36%). Currently, bilingual education certified teachers largely hold bilingual supplemental certificates paired with a primary certification in early childhood-sixth grade.

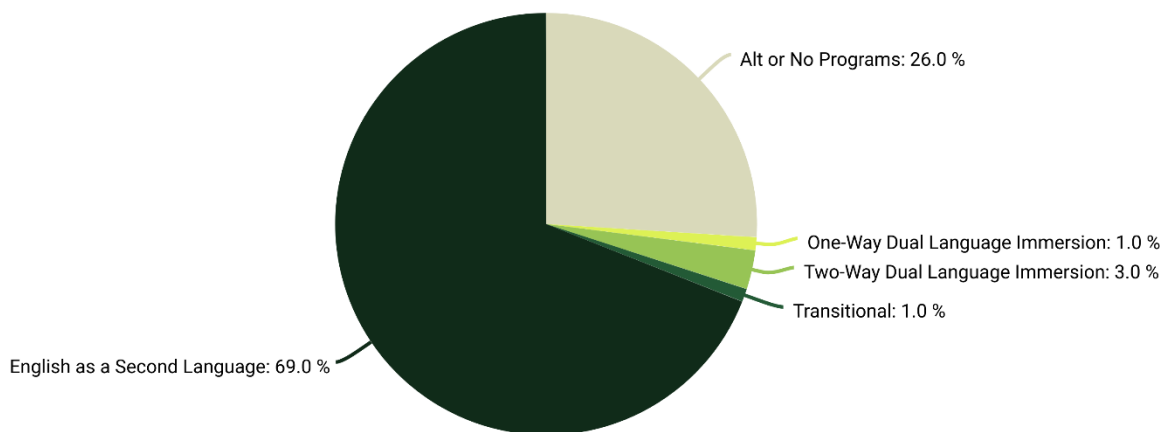
Emergent Bilingual Students PreK-5th Grade by Program



Data source: TEA 2019-20

Yet 38% of Texas' emergent bilingual students attend grades 6-12. The vast majority attend ESL programs, and just 4% attend dual language immersion programs. Over a quarter are in alternative language programs, which are language programs without a certified bilingual or ESL teacher, or no bilingual/ESL programs at all.

Emergent Bilingual Students 6th-12th Grade by Program



Data source: TEA 2019-20

Research indicates that dual language programs offer the most effective education for increased linguistic and academic outcomes (Polanco & Luft de Baker, 2018; Thomas & Collier, 2019). This was the basis for the creation of the dual language allotment through HB 3 in 2019, and the incorporation of dual language program expansion as a goal of the SB 560 plan last session.

However, without a properly certified teacher pool for secondary level dual language programs, Texas cannot realize these important goals. A 2022 TEA report indicates that 11% of elementary bilingual/ESL teachers were out-of-field in 2021-22. But the proportion of out-of-field bilingual/ESL teachers jumped to over 35% for grades 6-8, and over 45% for grades 9-12 (TEA, 2022). **Nearly half of teachers in bilingual or ESL high school classes were not certified to do so.**

HB 3303 addresses this issue by directing the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) to institute new rules for teachers obtaining a bilingual supplemental certificate to more easily layer it with their initial certification, either in EC-6th or with a 7-12th subject certification. It also allows greater flexibility for passing the Bilingual Target Language Proficiency Test, which can be a major barrier for bilingual teacher candidates to becoming certified.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., at chloe.sikes@idra.org.

Resources

IDRA. (2023). Bilingual/ESL Teacher Shortages in Texas – IDRA Map. IDRA Community Action Dashboards.

<https://idra.news/TxMapTeacherShortage-BE/ESL>

IDRA. (2023). Texas Bilingual Education Funding – IDRA Map. IDRA Community Action Dashboards.

<https://idra.news/TxMapSchoolFundingBE>

Latham Sikes, C. (May 2022). High Quality Bilingual Education Programs Need More Support to Realize State Goals – IDRA Issue Brief. IDRA. <https://idra.news/TXfundingBilEd>

Polanco, P., & Luft de Baker, D. (2018). Transitional Bilingual Education and Two-Way Immersion Programs: Comparison of Reading Outcomes for English Learners in the United States. Athens Journal of Education, 5(4), 423-444. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1208284.pdf>

TEA. (July 2022). Out-of-Field Teaching for SY 2021-22 by Grade Level and Subject Area. Texas Education Agency. <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/out-of-field-2022.pdf>

Thomas, W.P., & Collier, V.P. (2019). Dual Language Education for All. In Dual Language Education: Teaching and Learning in Two Languages (pp. 91-105). Springer, Cham.

IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by leading policy analyses and advocacy; dynamic teacher training and principal coaching; useful research, evaluation and frameworks for action; and innovative student, family and community engagement.