



## **Robust Program Monitoring and Training Strengthens Quality Bilingual Education in Texas Schools**

**IDRA Testimony for House Bill 2164, submitted by Lizdelia Piñón, Ed.D., to the Texas House Public Education Committee, April 4, 2023**

Dear Chair Buckley and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Lizdelia Piñón, and I am the education associate 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 2164 as it aligns with the recommendations from the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Strategic Plan for Emergent Bilingual students and strengthens quality bilingual education programs through greater program support, monitoring and educator training (2023).

In Texas, TEA is responsible for monitoring bilingual education programs at the state level. The agency oversees compliance with federal and state laws related to bilingual education, including the requirements of the Texas *Bilingual Education Act* and the English Language Proficiency Standards.

TEA provides guidance and support to school districts and schools offering bilingual education programs, including training for teachers and administrators, monitoring program implementation, and support for program evaluation. The agency also collects data on bilingual education programs and reports on program effectiveness to state and federal policymakers. Yet, this is not enough. Bilingual education, ESL and special language program models can vary greatly in implementation, and many districts report needing greater support to develop quality bilingual and dual language programs to be implemented with fidelity.

### **Texas Must Provide More Robust Monitoring of Bilingual Education**

In Texas, the population of students who are emergent bilingual learners has been steadily increasing. These students face unique challenges when it comes to academic achievement, and research has shown that bilingual education programs can be effective in addressing these challenges. However, it is important to monitor these programs closely to ensure that they are effective in closing achievement gaps for all emergent bilingual students.

According to a report by TEA, only 29% of emergent bilingual students in grades 3-8 met the state standard for reading in 2020, compared to 48% of English-proficient students. Similarly, only 27% of emergent bilingual students met the state standard for math, compared to 46% of English-proficient students.

Bilingual education programs that are implemented well and with support do help close these achievement gaps by providing instruction in both English and the student's home language (Piñón, Carreón-Sánchez & Bishop, 2022). However, not all bilingual education programs are created equal, and some are not effective in addressing the unique needs of emergent bilingual students.

For example, a study by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine found that many bilingual education programs in the United States are not well-implemented and may not be effective in improving academic outcomes for emergent bilingual students (NASEM, 2017). The study recommended that states and districts closely monitor bilingual education programs to ensure that they are effectively addressing the needs of emergent bilingual students.

## **Texas Must Ensure Educators be Trained to Meet the Linguistic Needs of Each Diverse Learner**

Most educators and school administrators interact with emergent bilingual students and should be trained to meet their diverse linguistic needs both in and outside of bilingual education settings. The Committee Substitute for HB 2164 would additionally ensure that all Texas educators have ongoing training to ensure emergent bilingual students' academic success. This recommendation furthers the steps taken through HB 3 (86R, 2019) to incentivize dual language programs by offering state training materials for educators to understand and implement those programs (Latham Sikes, 2022).

In conclusion, monitoring bilingual education programs and increasing educator training in bilingual education in Texas is crucial for closing achievement gaps for emergent bilingual students. Bilingual education has the potential to improve academic outcomes for these students, but only if it is implemented effectively. By closely monitoring these programs, we can ensure that they are meeting the needs of emergent bilingual students and providing them with the support they need to succeed academically.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, contact me at [liz.pinon@idra.org](mailto:liz.pinon@idra.org).

## **Resources**

- Arteagoitia, I., & Yen, S.J. (August 6, 2020). Equity in Representing Literacy Growth in Dual Language Bilingual Education for Emerging Bilingual Students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 54(3), 719-742. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/tesq.588>
- Dorner, L.M., & Cervantes-Soon, C.G. (2020). Equity for Students Learning English in Dual Language Bilingual Education: Persistent Challenges and Promising Practices. *TESOL Quarterly*, 54(3), 535-547.
- Henderson, K.I., & Palmer, D.K. (2020). Dual Language Bilingual Education: Teacher Cases and Perspectives on Large-Scale Implementation. *Multilingual Matters*.
- Latham Sikes, C. (May 23, 2022). High Quality Bilingual Education Programs Need More Support to Realize State Goals – IDRA Issue Brief. IDRA. <https://idra.news/txfundingBilEd>
- Latham Sikes, C., & Villanueva, C. (2021). Creating a More Bilingual Texas: A Closer Look at Bilingual Education in the Lone Star State. IDRA & Every Texan. <http://idra.news/BilingualTx>
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. (2017). Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures – Report Highlights. National Academies Press. <https://gradelevelreading.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Reports-for-Hot-Topics-GLR-in-Action.pdf>
- Piñón, L., Carreón-Sánchez, S., & Bishop, S. (September 2022). Emergent Bilingual Learner Education – Literature Review. IDRA. <https://www.idra.org/support/emergent-bilingual-learner-education-literature-review/>
- TEA. (January 2023). SB 560 Emergent Bilingual Strategic Plan. Texas Education Agency <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/sb-560-emergent%20bilingual-strategic-plan.pdf>

*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.*