

# Following the Science: Bilingualism as an Asset Supporting Early Brain Development

June 6, 2023

Co-Sponsored by



# Presenters



**Claude Goldenberg, Ph.D.**  
Professor Emeritus  
Stanford University



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Northwestern University



**Martha Martinez, Ph.D.**  
Senior Director of Research  
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SEAL



**Robert Stechuk, Ph.D.**  
Director of Early Childhood  
Education Initiatives  
UnidosUS

# Moderator



Leigh Giangreco  
Journalist

A top-down view of several children sitting around a large white sheet of paper on the floor, drawing with colored pencils and markers. The paper is covered with various hand-drawn illustrations of school supplies and educational concepts. On the left, there are drawings of a microscope, a clock, a pencil sharpener, and a ruler. In the center, a large, detailed drawing of a school building with a sun rising behind it is the focal point. To the right, there are drawings of a pair of scissors, a girl's face, a small board with the equation  $2+2=$ , and a vertical column of numbers from 1 to 9. At the bottom, there are drawings of a computer monitor, a calculator, a glue bottle, and a magnifying glass over the number 3. The children's hands and heads are visible around the edges of the paper, showing they are actively engaged in the drawing process.

CGLR Webinar on Bilingualism:  
*The Early Bilingual Development Landscape:  
What Does It Look Like?*

Robert Stechuk, PhD

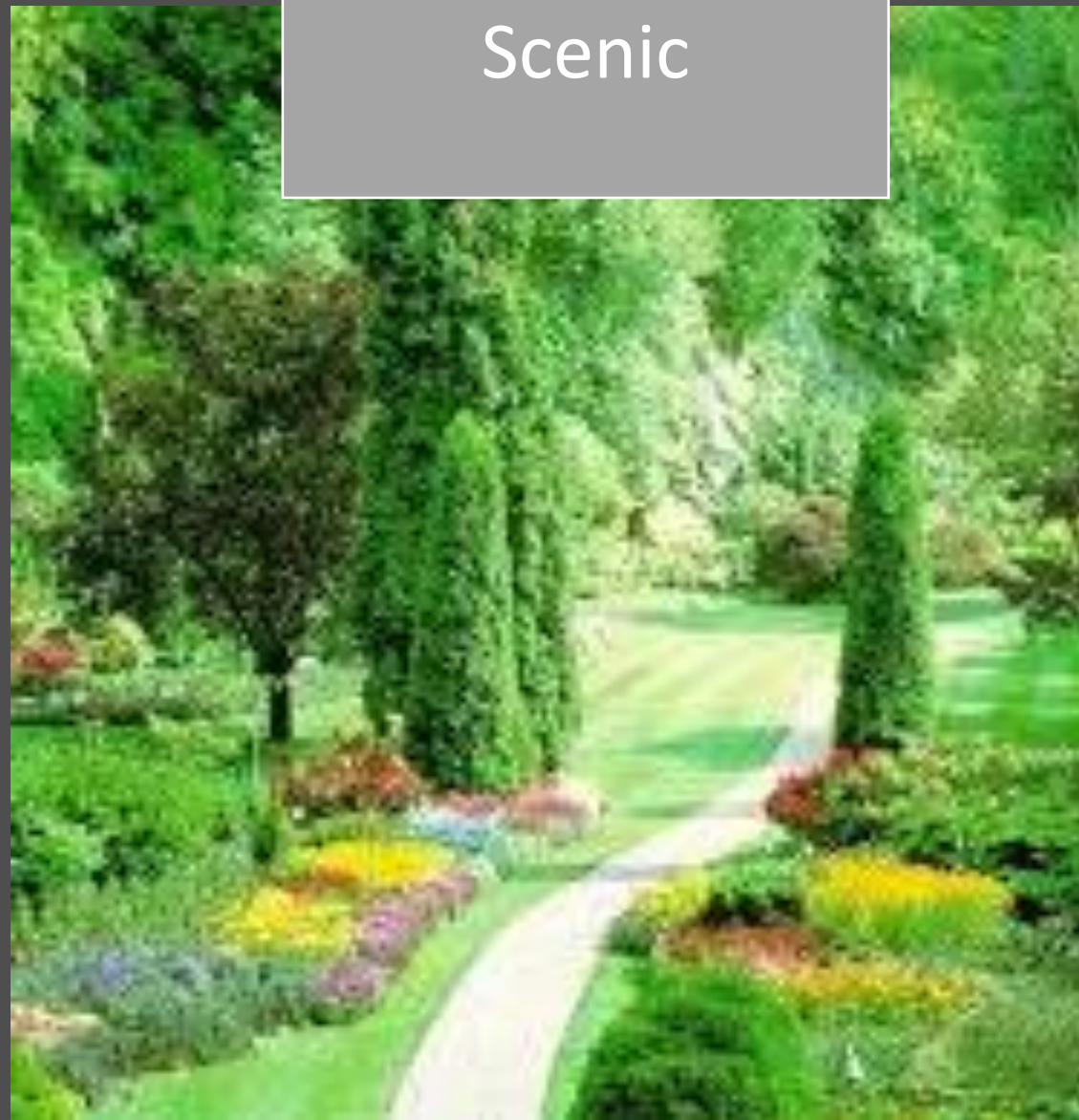
Director of Early Childhood Education Initiatives, UnidosUS

June 6, 2023

Toxic



Scenic



The Early Bilingual  
Development  
Landscape 2023:

*What's  
toxic?*



# Toxic #1

- 1a: ECE teacher compensation is overwhelmingly inadequate.
- 1b: many Latino teachers required to obtain a degree to keep their position.
- Their classroom = 50% - 80% - 100% DLLs.
- HOWEVER -- College coursework in many locations did NOT include content information about dual language development or cultural responsiveness.



**UNIDOS US**  
STRONGER COMMUNITIES. STRONGER AMERICA.

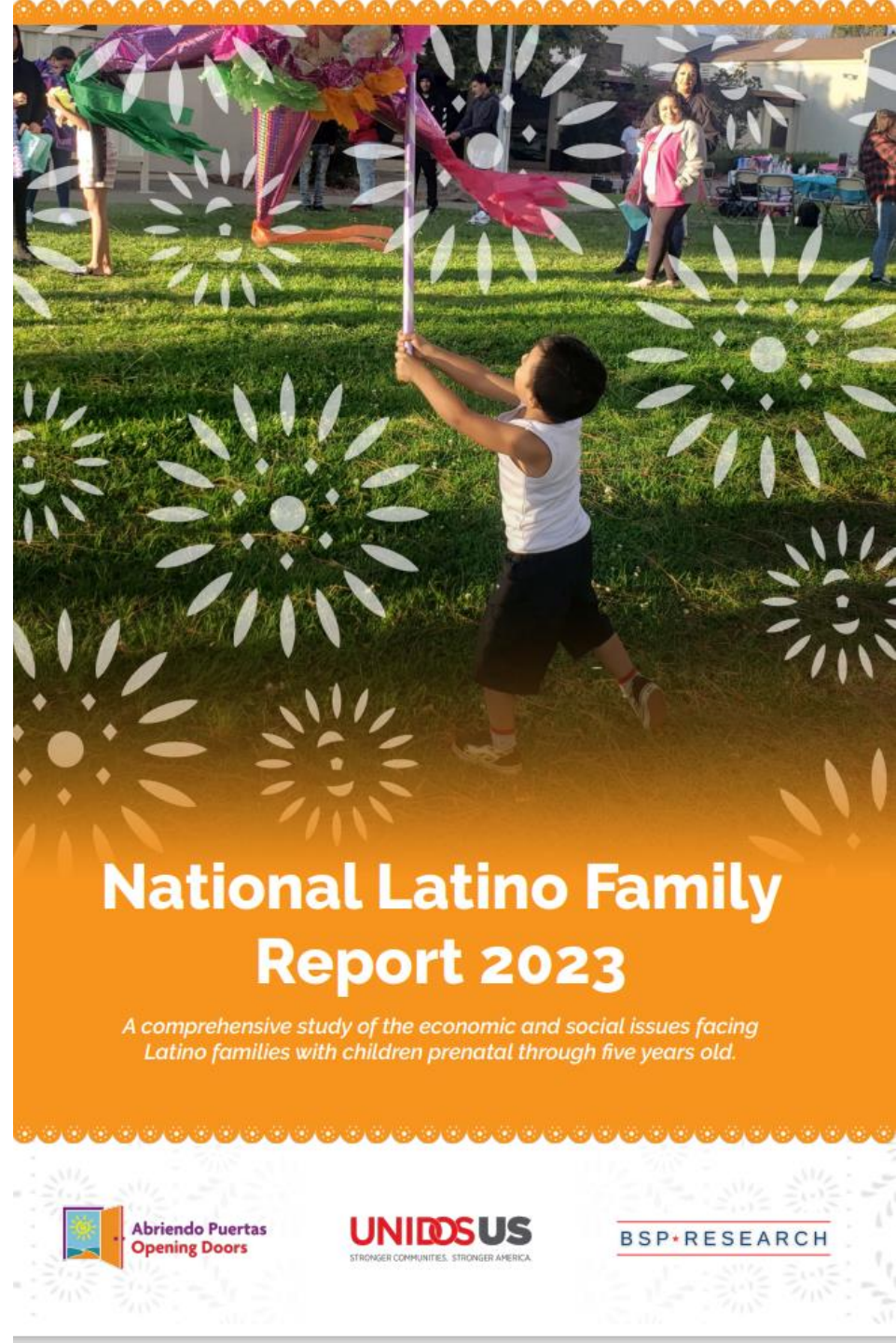
Latina Teachers and  
the “BA Challenge:”

Impacts and Conditions of  
Increasing Degree Requirements in  
Early Childhood Education

## Toxic #2

Latino families report frequent experiences with racism/discrimination:

**20% of Latino children encountered bullying or shaming for speaking Spanish at school within the last year**





# UnidosUS Parent Focus Groups 2022

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San Antonio (2), Chicago (2), &  
Wilmington, DE

32 participants: 30 women, 2 men ;

parents of a child under the age of three  
years

17 born in Mexico; 15 in the U.S.;

age range: 22 – 44 years

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Groups conducted in the participants' preferred  
language (Spanish/English)

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# Toxic #3

- Latino families' experiences with misinformation about early bilingualism are **common:**

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- All participants stated that they have encountered the idea that children are “confused” if they grow up with more than one language on multiple occasions.
- Several parents in Texas said “that’s the way we grew up” and that their families often “hid” their Spanish when outside the home.



# Toxic #3+

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- Latino families report specific experiences with misinformation:

*“To say to you exactly what she [the child’s speech therapist] said [to me]: ‘Try speaking to him [the child] in English. Don’t bring in any Spanish right now...”*

*She’s like, ‘right now, you don’t want to bring in any Spanish...you don’t want to confuse him...’”*

- Latina mom, UnidosUS’ parent focus group participant, July 12, 2022, San Antonio Texas.

# A Scenic View =

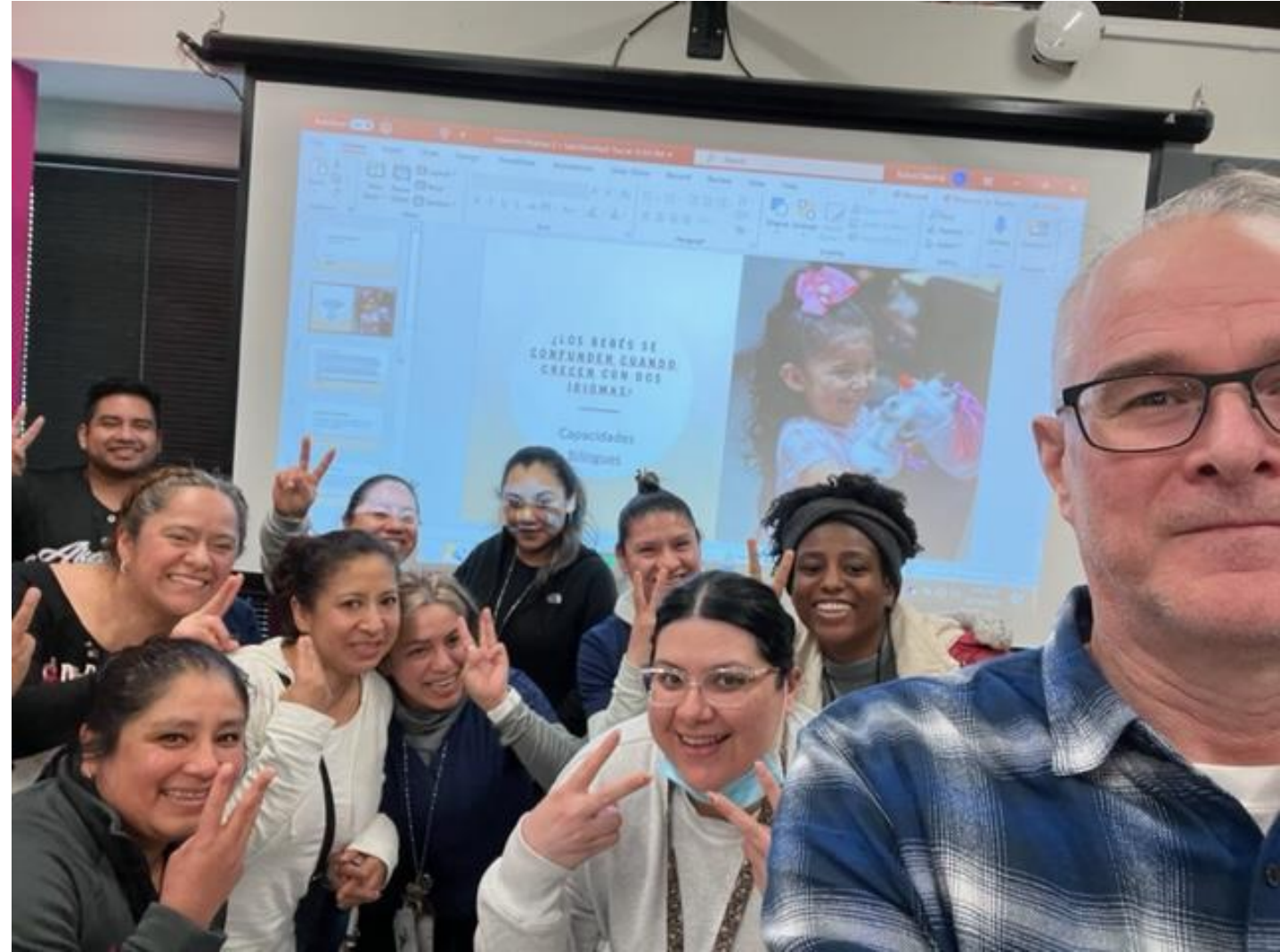
- AVANCE: San Antonio TX
- 2-generation programs
- Parent Child Education Program (PCEP) is 26 weeks; covers a range of topics including bilingual development, early literacy & cultural identity
- Toy-making activities engage families along with ECE content
- Launched a father-engagement initiative this spring



A Scenic View =

Adelante Mujeres  
Forest Grove, OR

- Parent advocacy trainings
- 9 of 24 teachers enrolled in online AA degree taught entirely in Spanish from Clackamas CC.
- High levels of teacher expertise and **STRONG** advocates for bilingualism & cultural responsiveness



# Strong Responses to Misinformation

- “This “advice” separates parent(s) from the child.”
- “This is destroying the family and connections between parent and child.”
- “This cuts off the child from their culture. It destroys identity. Losing language means losing who the child is”
- “Sorry, you are mis-informed.”
- Teacher focus group participants, Adelante Mujeres, Forest Grove OR.  
February 21, 2023



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TOPIC BRIEF

MAY 2023



## LATINO INFANT INITIATIVE

### Vital and Valuable: Latino Fathers and Their Infants and Toddlers

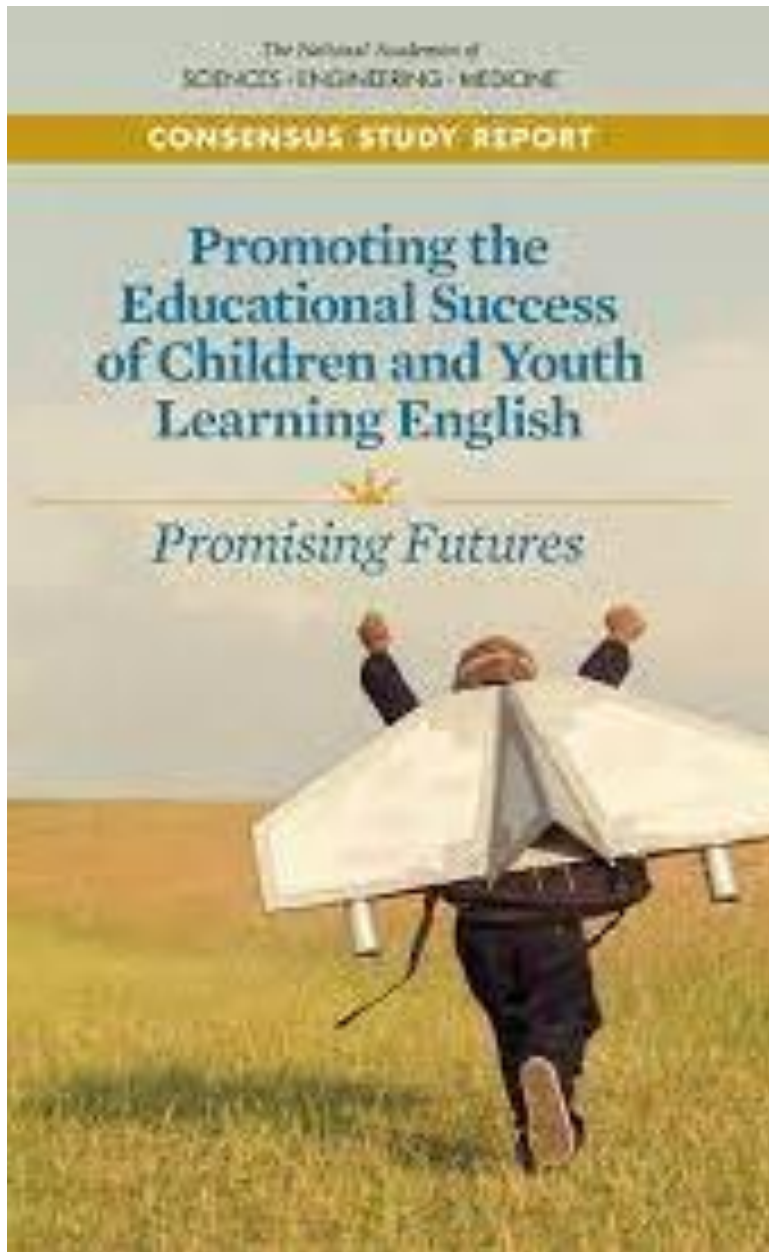
*As stated in our prior publications, Latino infants are re•making the United States. In 1970, the Latino population of the U.S. was less than 10 million people; today, we are more than 62 million. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, this may increase to more than 110 million by 2060! This increase is overwhelmingly due to the births of millions of Latino babies. Latino families, congratulations!*

For more than 50 years, UnidosUS has worked to promote the well•being of the Latino community. This publication from the UnidosUS's Latino Infant Initiative (LII) specifically aims to identify and discuss the vital and valuable roles Latino fathers can play in promoting the healthy development and early learning of their young children, specifically preparing infants and toddlers for reading success.

#### *A Special Opportunity*

Latino fathers can play vital and valuable roles in promoting their infants' and toddlers' development and educational success. Considering the many aspects of fatherhood, it is crucial to consider key scientific evidence on infant development, early reading, and dual language learning. The main message: *fathers can support their infant's long•term school success through daily interactions that include language.* Daily interactions drive the development of skills, attitudes, and abilities that promote bonding, joy, attachment, confidence, **and the language skills that are the foundation for reading success.**



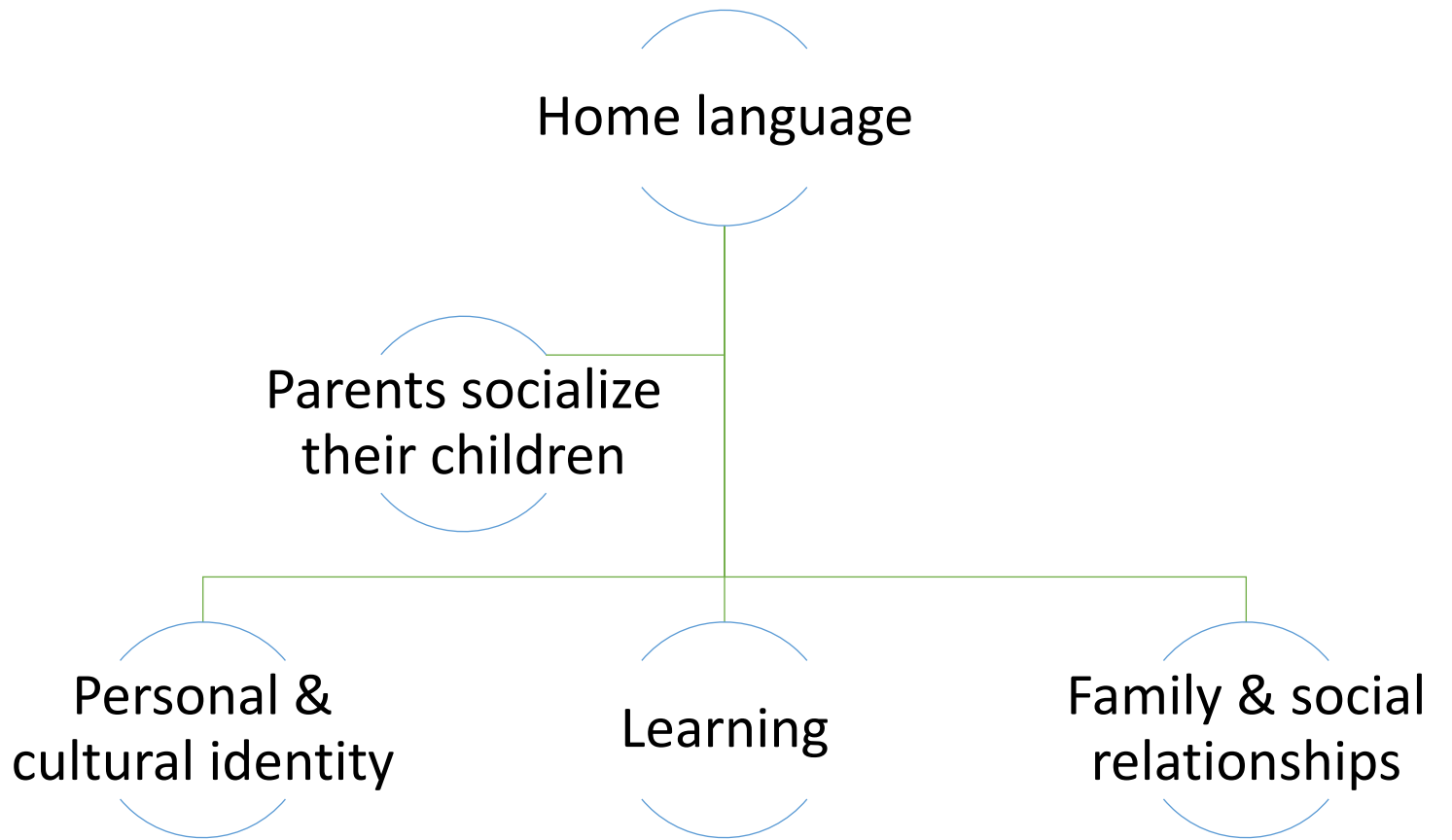


National Academies of Sciences (NASEM, 2017):

- Children **have** the capacity to learn two languages easily.
- Children should **not** give up their home language to learn English.



Home language is a resource, for parents & children

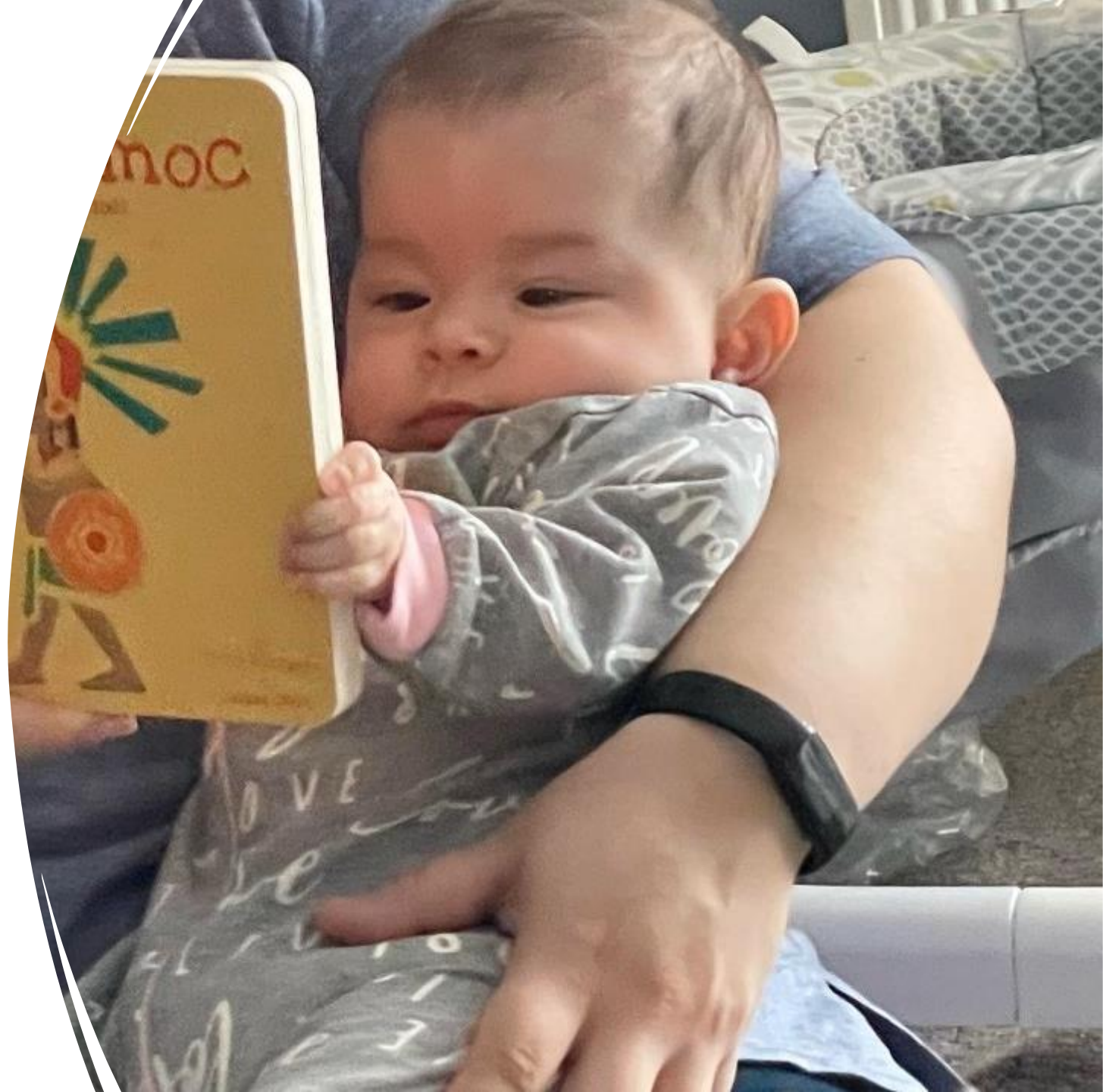


# UnidosUS' Publications

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See “Library” at:

[www.unidosus.org](http://www.unidosus.org)





# National Latino Family Survey

- *A survey of 1,300 families, conducted by BSP Research in partnership with Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors and UnidosUS in October 2022. The study represents parents of children aged prenatal to five, with a robust oversample of parents with children prenatal to three years old.*
- The study investigated the economic and social issues facing Latino families.
- Latino families demonstrated strong support for education and bilingualism. They are calling for more resources to help their children develop bilingually and are clear that early care and education programs must incorporate cultural responsiveness.
- [National Latino Family Report 2023 \(ap-od.org\)](#)



## *Vital and valuable: Latino fathers and their infants and toddlers*

Description: Latino fathers can play vital and valuable roles in promoting their infants' and toddlers' development and educational success. Considering the many aspects of fatherhood, it is crucial to consider key scientific evidence on infant development, early reading, and dual language learning. The main message: *fathers can support their infant's long-term school success through daily interactions that include language*. Daily interactions drive the development of skills, attitudes, and abilities that promote bonding, joy, attachment, confidence, and the language skills that are the foundation for reading success.

<https://unidosus.org/publications/vital-and-valuable-latino-fathers/>

# *Vital y valioso: El papá latino y su bebé*

- Los padres latinos pueden desempeñar un papel vital y valioso en la promoción del desarrollo y el éxito educacional de sus bebés y niños pequeños. Considerando los muchos aspectos de la paternidad, es crucial identificar y considerar varias piezas clave de evidencia científica sobre el desarrollo infantil, la lectura temprana y el aprendizaje de dos idiomas. El mensaje principal es: *los padres pueden contribuir al éxito escolar a largo plazo de sus hijos mediante interacciones diarias que incluyan lenguaje*. Las interacciones diarias impulsan el desarrollo de destrezas, actitudes y habilidades que fomentan el vínculo, la alegría, el apego, la confianza y las habilidades lingüísticas que son la base del éxito en la lectura.
- <https://unidosus.org/publications/vital-y-valioso-el-papa-latino/>



# Crucial Conversations

- *Early Childhood Education (ECE) settings and services ought to be culturally and linguistically responsive for all children.* Unfortunately, data from parent focus groups conducted by UnidosUS in 2022 demonstrate that Latino families continue to experience a lack of understanding within ECE systems, with their children bearing the brunt of continuing misinformation. We found that speech therapists were advising Latina moms not to speak Spanish to their children so as not to “confuse” them. This topic brief reviews our focus group findings and presents key research evidence, compiled over decades, that contradicts this advice. Recommendations for programs, parents and family members and policy makers are included.
- [UnidosUS LII TopicBrief-CrucialConversations.pdf](#)

# Conversaciones Cruciales

- *Descubrimos que terapeutas del lenguaje estaban aconsejando a madres latinas que no hablaran español con sus hijos para no “confundirlos”. Este resumen temático revisa lo que descubrimos en nuestros grupos de entrevista y muestra evidencia científica clave, compilada durante décadas, que contradice este consejo. Se incluyen recomendaciones para programas, padres y miembros de la familia, y para quienes hacen política pública.*
- [UnidosUS LII TopicBrief-ConversacionesCruciales.pdf](#)



# Latino infants: a continuing imperative

- *Latino infants are reshaping the United States.* Hispanics are one of the fastest-growing populations in the country, increasing by an amazing 23% since 2010. There is an urgent need to develop informed policies and provide sufficient resources to ensure Latino babies develop into healthy children. UnidosUS reviewed research evidence on dual-language learning, culturally responsive practices, and numerous health topics important to Latino infant development.
- The report also presents the experiences of program administrators, who describe the impacts of COVID-19 on this development, results from a survey of early childhood teachers, as well as policy recommendations for the state and federal levels.
- [Latino Infants: A Continuing Imperative | UnidosUS](#)



# Bebés Latinos: Un Imperativo Continuo

- *Los bebés latinos están transformando los Estados Unidos.* Los hispanos son una de las poblaciones de más rápido crecimiento en el país, con un aumento sorprendente de 23% desde 2010. Existe una necesidad urgente de desarrollar políticas informadas y proporcionar recursos suficientes para garantizar que los bebés latinos se conviertan en niños sanos. UnidosUS revisó la evidencia de investigaciones sobre el aprendizaje de dos idiomas, las prácticas culturalmente receptivas y numerosos temas de salud importantes para el desarrollo infantil latino.
- El informe también presenta las experiencias de administradores de programas, quienes describen los impactos de COVID-19 en este desarrollo, los resultados de una encuesta a maestros de la primera infancia, además de recomendaciones de políticas a nivel estatal y federal.
- [Bebés Latinos: Un Imperativo Continuo | UnidosUS](#)

# Latina Teachers and the BA Challenge

- *In 2018, UnidosUS conducted policy research on Latina teachers working in ECE settings operated by our Affiliate organizations.*
- Our primary purpose was to examine the “BA Challenge,” namely: the concern that Latina ECE teachers without degrees would lose or leave their positions due to increased educational requirements. Across the United States, many Latina ECE teachers must now have a bachelor’s degree or be enrolled in a degree program as a condition of their employment.
- [unidosus thebachallenge lr.pdf](#)

# References

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*Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures.* National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. [Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures | The National Academies Press](#)

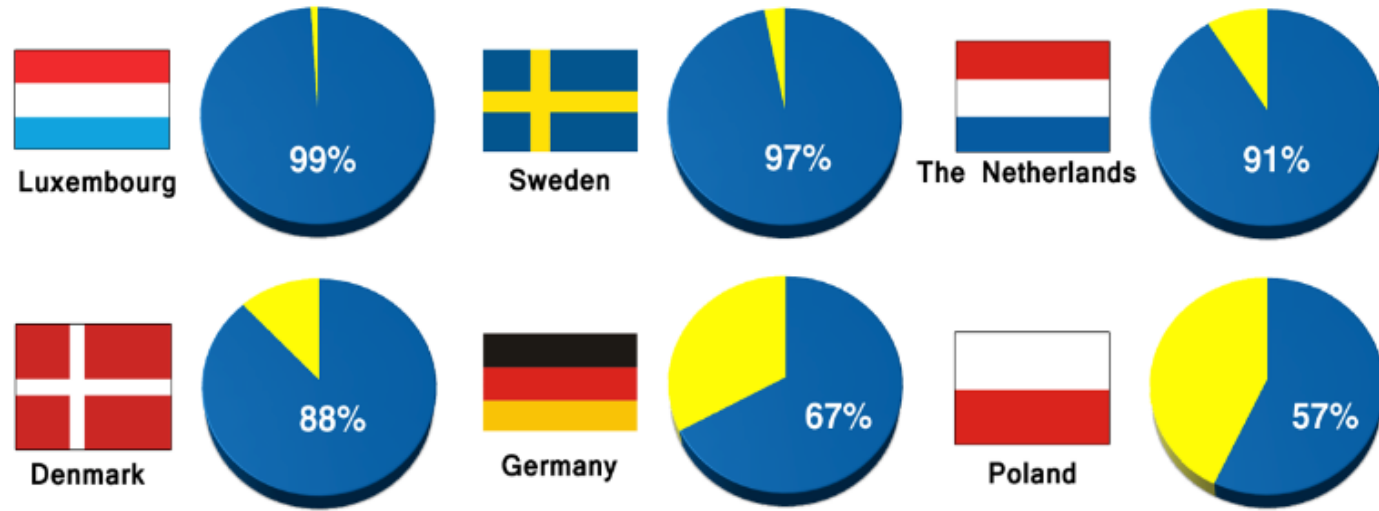
National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). *How People Learn II: Learners, Contexts, and Cultures.* Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/24783>.

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# Percentage of Bilingual Speakers in the World

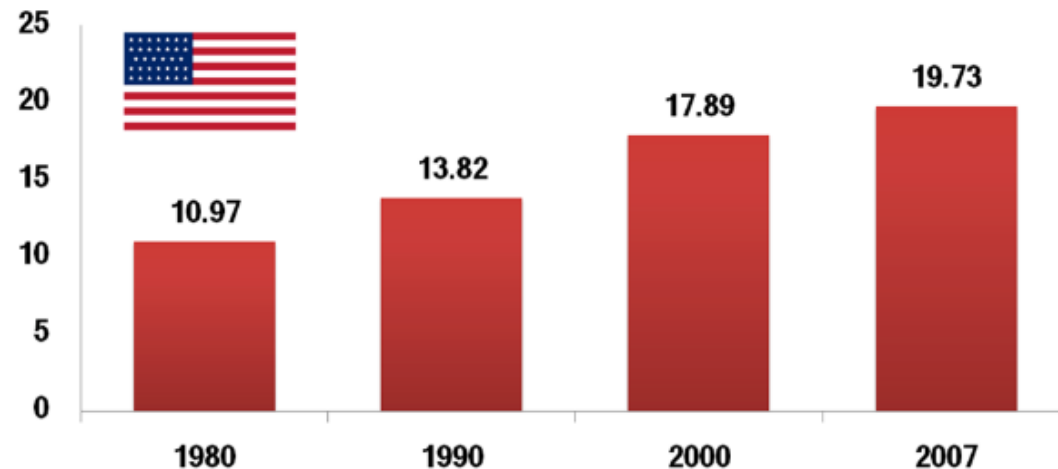
## European Union



Shook & Marian, 2012

Source: European Commission, "Europeans and their Languages," 2006

## Percentage of US Population who spoke a language other than English at home by year

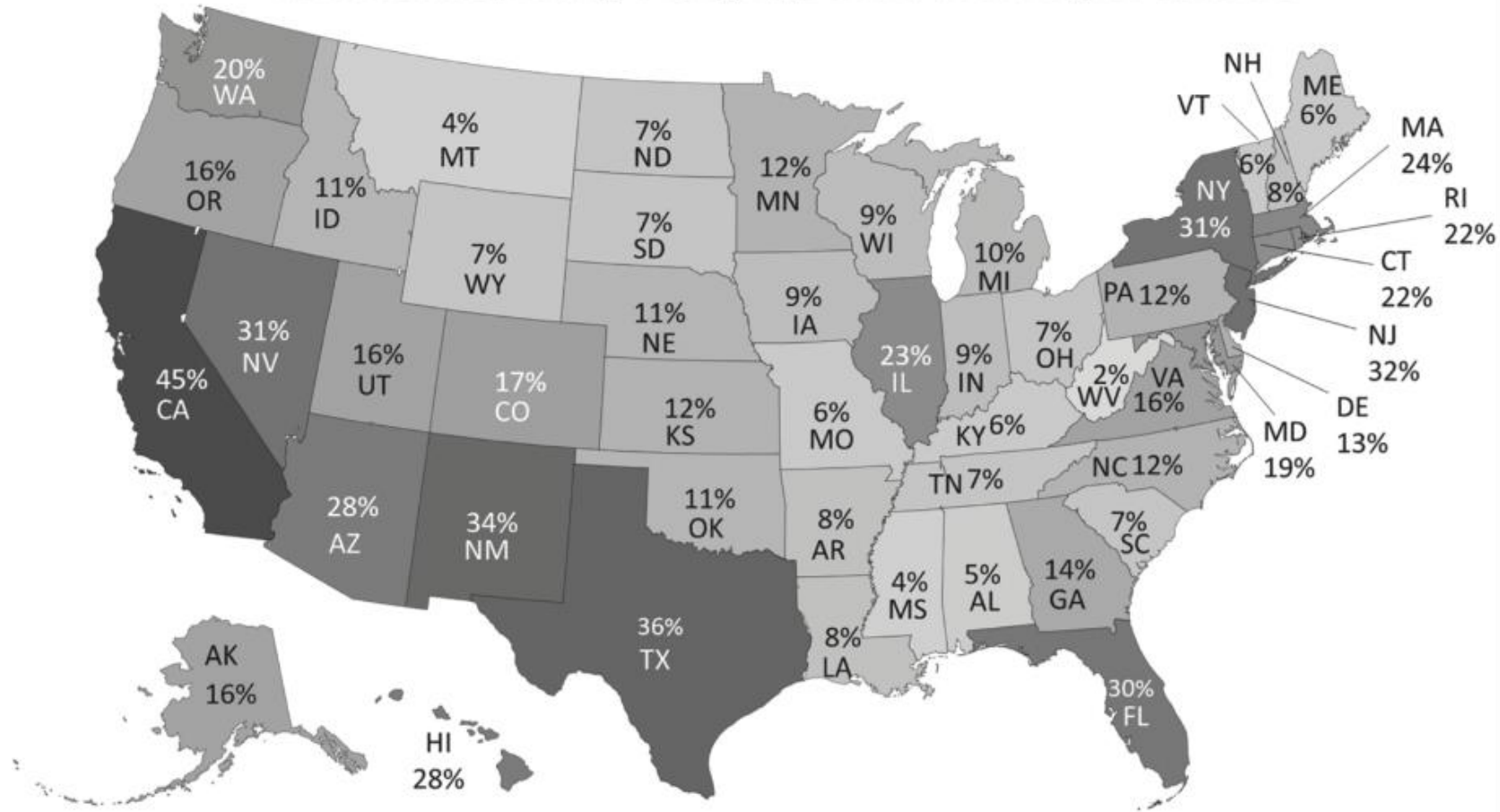


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey

**Growth:** Between 1980 and 2000, in the U.S., the number of individuals who spoke a language other than English at home has *more than doubled*.

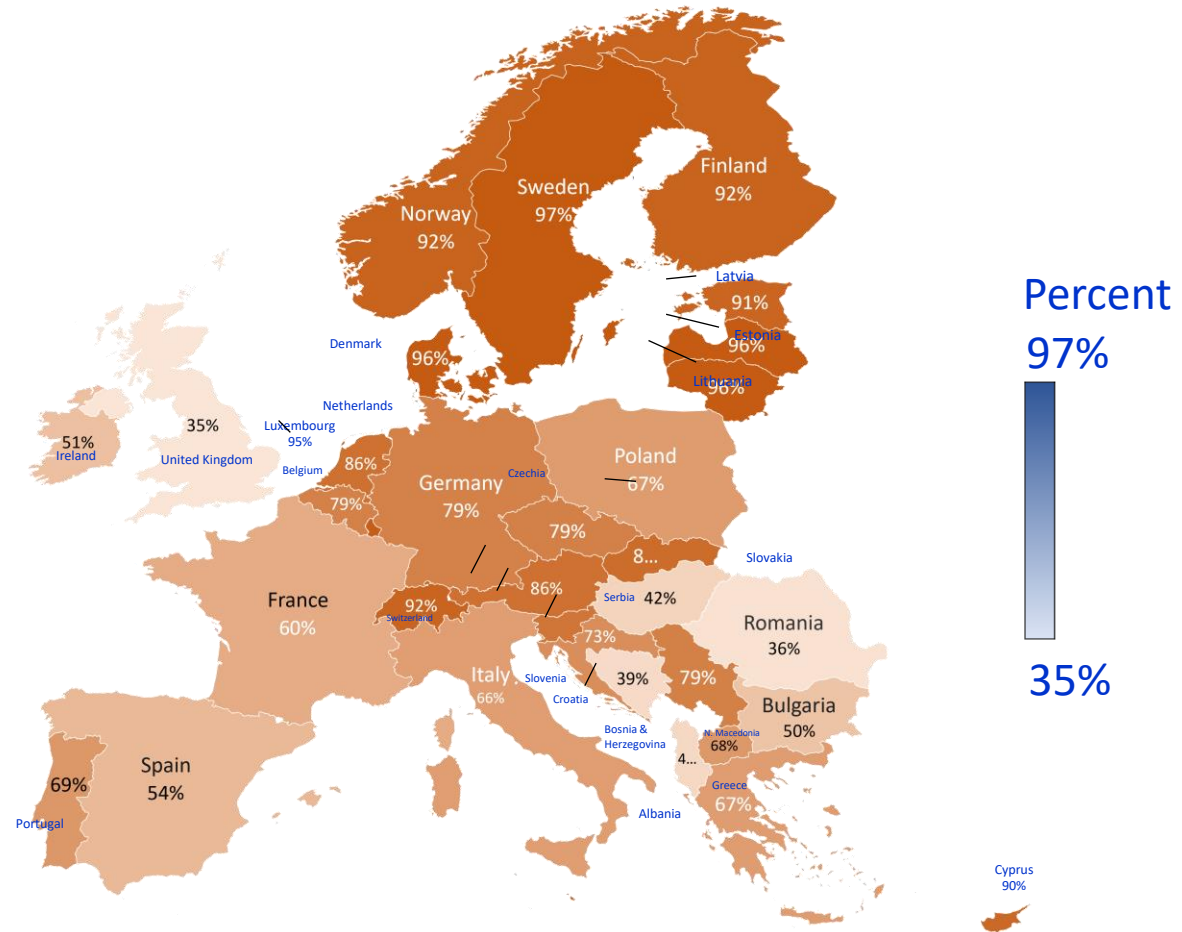
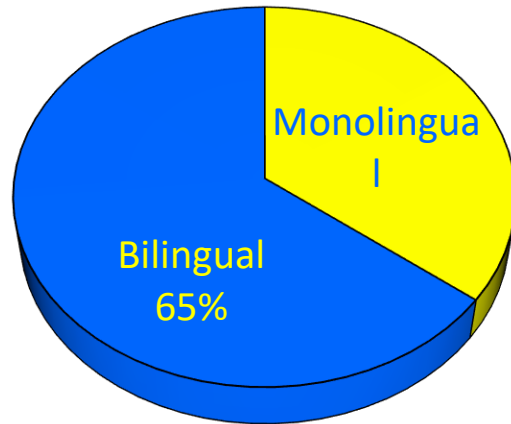
Shook & Marian (2012) *Cerebrum*

## Households Speaking a Language Other Than English at Home

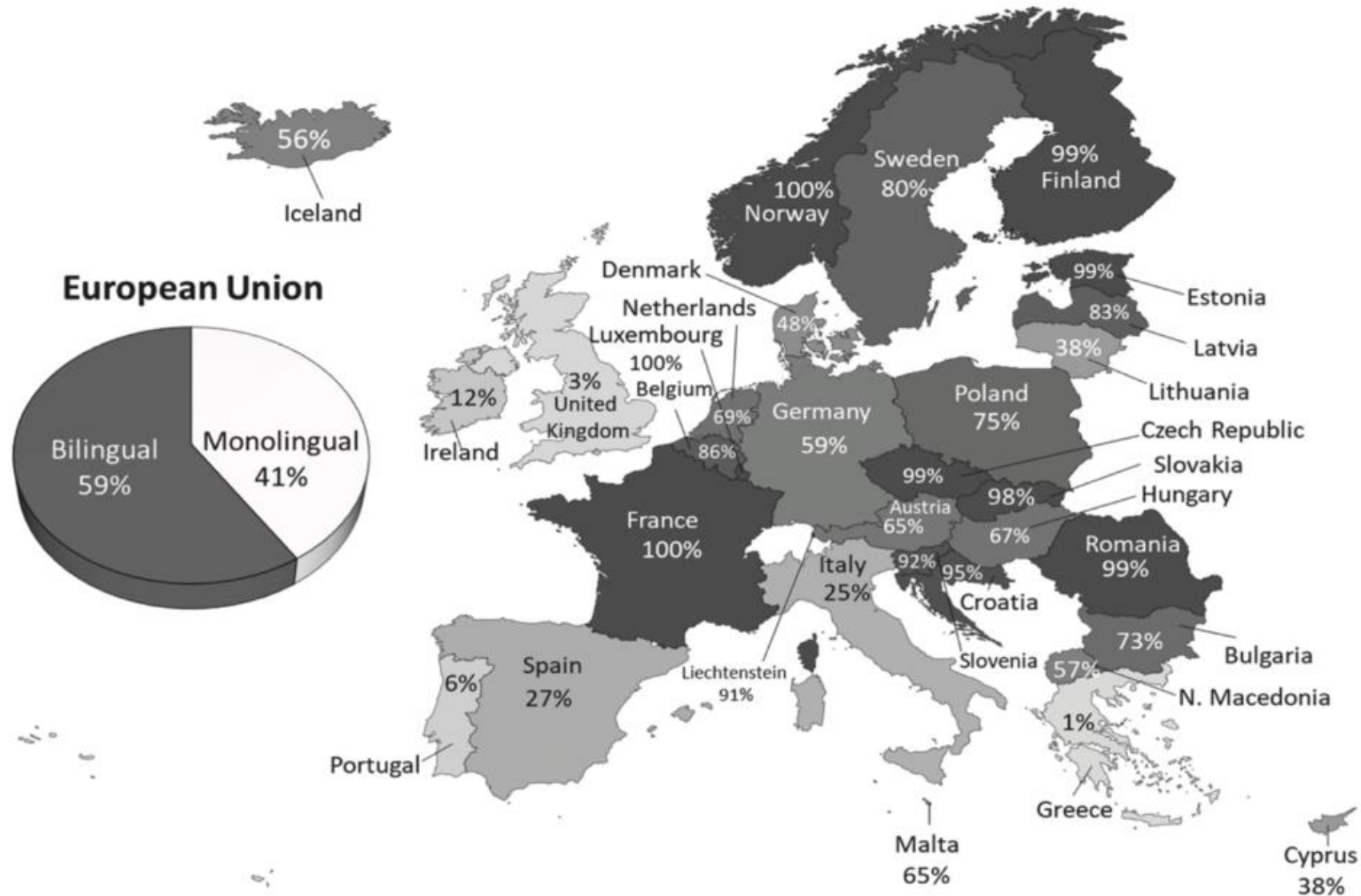


# Percentage of Bi/Multilingual Speakers in Europe (Ages 25-64)

European Union



# Students Learning Three or More Languages in Europe





poweroflanguagebook.com

vioricamarian.com



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# **SEAL (Sobrato Early Academic Language)**

**CGLR Webinar – June 6, 2023**

# **Our Why: Fostering the Linguistic Genius of MLs**

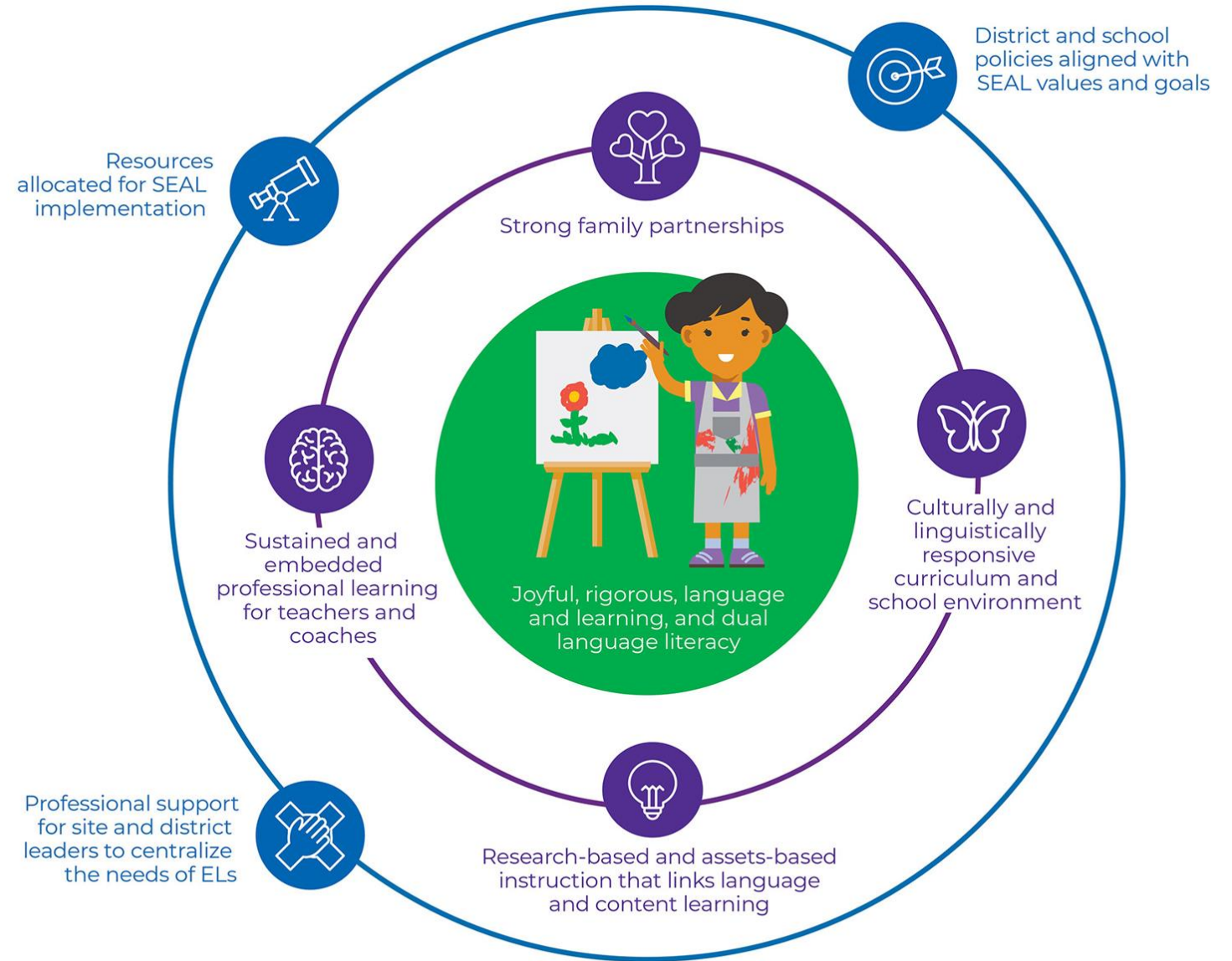


## **California demographics**

- **60% of children under 5 are Dual language learners (DLLs)**
- **Almost 20% of K-12 students and almost 30% of K-2 students are ELs**
- **Almost half of ELs who enter in K become long-term ELs**

# The SEAL Model

- Piloted in 2008
- P-3 approach initially/  
P-elementary school approach now
- Past few years:  
Additional professional development offerings besides the full model



**SEAL's whole-school strategy**

# How SEAL supports (Bi)Literacy Development



- Intentional focus on rich oral language
- Integrating knowledge/content learning, language and literacy development
- Leveraging the home language
- Cross-language connections/metalinguage awareness
- Joy in learning/literacy development
- Ideal goal: Biliteracy (English and home language)

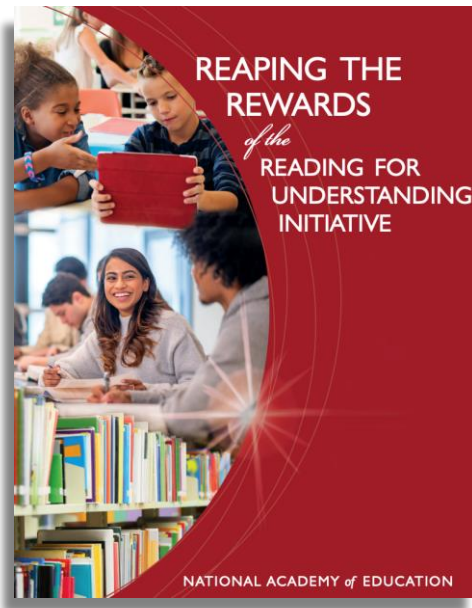
SEAL in a preschool classroom: <https://youtu.be/QonwJ7tqCiU>

# SEAL's Contributions to the Science of Reading/Literacy Movement



## Centering MLs in the Literacy Movement

- Highlighting their needs and gaps in research and practice
  - o Bilingualism/Biliteracy development



## Aligned with the RfU Initiative Report Headlines:

1. **Knowledge** is cause, consequence, and covariate of reading comprehension.
2. **Language** drives every facet of reading comprehension.
3. Reading is an inherently **cultural** activity.

# Contact Info and Resource links

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[martha@seal.org](mailto:martha@seal.org)



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SEAL.ORG

## SEAL's contributions to SOR/literacy for MLs

SEAL at the Reading League Summit: <https://seal.org/seal-at-the-reading-league-summit/>

Effective Literacy Development and Instruction for DLLs in ECE: [https://multilingualliteracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/NCEL\\_ECE\\_White\\_Paper.pdf](https://multilingualliteracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/NCEL_ECE_White_Paper.pdf)

National Committee for Effective Literacy website: <https://multilingualliteracy.org/>

# Upcoming GLR Learning Tuesdays Webinars:

## PEER EXCHANGE LEARNING CONVERSATION WEBINAR

Learning Begins at Home: How Housing Agencies Can Support Attendance and Engagement in School

Tuesday, June 13, 12:30-2:00 p.m. ET/9:30-11:00 a.m. PT

## GLR LEARNING TUESDAYS: PARTNER WEBINAR

Nurture Connection: The Movement for Early Relational Health

Tuesday, June 13, 3:00-4:30 p.m. ET/12-1:30 p.m. PT

## FUNDER TO FUNDER CONVERSATION

Kindergarten as a "Sturdy Bridge": Place-Based Investments

Tuesday, June 20, 12:30-2:00 p.m. ET/9:30-11:00 a.m. PT

## GLR LEARNING TUESDAYS: PARTNER WEBINAR

Strengthening Kindergarten to Improve Children's PreK-3rd Grade Experiences

Tuesday, June 20, 3:00-4:30 p.m. ET/12-1:30 p.m. PT

**Please Join Us**

[gradelevelreading.net](http://gradelevelreading.net) @readingby3rd #GLReading #LearningTuesdays #GLRKeepers

