

43% and Growing: Young Children from Immigrant Families in New York and How to Support their Success

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Introduction

The New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), with the support of the Migration Policy Institute, has undertaken the task of mapping the early childhood education and care landscape for immigrant families across New York State.

This work began rooted in an initiative we designed in New York City wherein grassroots member groups conduct outreach to immigrant families regarding Pre-K and other early childhood initiatives and provide enrollment support, while gathering information regarding the barriers that families face in accessing the programs. In order to better understand how families access programs and how well programs and care are aligned with immigrant communities' strengths and needs, this work grew into a statewide project. In 2018 we conducted regional focus groups with immigrant community-based organizations (CBOs), direct service providers, and immigrant community advocates in key regions across the state, as well as education policymakers, researchers and other key stakeholders. We revisited these issues with many of these groups again in 2019. From these conversations, the NYIC has uncovered trends throughout New York State with regards to access and barriers to child care and early childhood education for immigrant families with children aged 0-8. This report outlines our findings and recommendations to New York State.

The New York Immigration Coalition is an umbrella policy and advocacy organization for nearly 200 groups in New York State that work with immigrants and refugees. The NYIC envisions a New York State that is stronger because all people are welcome, treated fairly, and given the chance to pursue their dreams. Its work specifically addresses the needs of New York's most marginalized immigrant communities, including newly-arrived immigrants, low income parents, and those with limited English proficiency. Boasting 30 years of organizational experience reforming New York's educational system, the NYIC has a distinguished history of improving immigrant students' access to resources and support and advancing immigrant family engagement in schools.

Immigrant Family Background

New York families are immigrant families. There are more than four million immigrants in New York State,¹ who make up nearly a quarter of New York's entire population, and whose numbers are rapidly growing.² Almost half — 43% — of New York's children age 0-8 are emergent multilingual learners (EMLLs). EMLLs, also often referred to as dual language learners (DLLs), are children who have at least one parent at home who speaks a language other than English.³ Since 2000, New York has experienced an 8% growth in its young EMLL population.⁴

Young EMLLs have enormous potential when supported in their developing cultural and linguistic skills. Research has clearly shown that multilingualism is accompanied by substantial cognitive benefits, benefits that children can draw upon for a lifetime.⁵ EMLLs often come from families who have risked everything to give their children opportunities they did not have and those families care very deeply about their children's access to a quality education. When given that quality education and the chance to develop English proficiency, children and youth who formerly did not have English proficiency outperform their native English-speaking peers.⁶

While immigrant families and young children have tremendous assets, they face

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substantial challenges in the absence of the right supports. In New York, 55% of EMLLs live in low-income families, compared with 37% of non EMLLs.⁷ There are 970,000 parents of EMLLs in New York. 42% of these parents have limited proficiency in English and a further 21% have not completed high school, significantly more than 5.8% of the non-EMLL parent population.

Immigrant Family Background

Given this landscape, immigrant families stand to benefit enormously from access to quality early childhood education and care programs, which we refer to in this report as early childhood programs. Research shows that children who attend quality early childhood programs are better prepared for kindergarten, have stronger language skills in the first years of elementary school, are less likely to repeat a grade or drop out of school, and graduate high school at higher rates than those who do not participate in such programs.⁸ This is particularly significant in New York given the data outlined above, and given that the current high school graduation

rate for multilingual learners (MLLs) is 34%.⁹ However, EMLLs are underrepresented in Pre-K. While 58% of non-EMLL children ages 3 and 4 are enrolled in Pre-K in New York, only 52% of EMLLs are enrolled.¹⁰ Nationally, EMLLs and children in immigrant families are underserved by home visiting services,¹¹ and children with parents who are still learning English are less likely than children with English-proficient parents to access center-based care.¹² The need for access to quality programs that support the development and success of both children and their parents in a culturally and linguistically fluent way is urgent for this growing community.



Early learning center in Lower East Side, Manhattan, New York City.
Photographer: David Grossman / Alamy Stock Photo

Over the past several years, New York's education and other leaders have launched important initiatives supporting the state's young children. New York State Medicaid created the First 1000 Days on Medicaid Initiative, gathering cross-sector stakeholders and developing a ten-point agenda focused on enhancing access to services and improving outcomes for children on Medicaid in their first 1,000 days of life.¹³ The New York State Board of Regents Early Childhood Workgroup¹⁴ formed a Blue Ribbon Committee to transform the birth to age eight early care and education system in the State of New York.¹⁵ The Committee released its final recommendations in mid-September 2018, which encompass key policy and legislative recommendations, as well as budget recommendations. In addition, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) has done very important work through its Committee on Bilingual Education in Prekindergarten Programs, notably creating a protocol and EMLL Language Profile to guide and support state-funded prekindergarten programs in implementing best practices relative to the

role of the home language and to identify when a Pre-K student's home or primary language is other than English.¹⁶ These are critical, initial milestones in supporting schools and districts in providing quality programs for EMLLs and NYSED is commended for this work.

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However, there is more work to be done. In an effort to support New York State's policymakers in their work, we have outlined below the findings from our grassroots research.



Nursery school in Lower East Side, Manhattan, New York City. Photographer: David Grossman / Alamy Stock Photo

Early Childhood Needs Assessment Findings

The NYIC conducted interviews and focus groups across New York State to understand the barriers and opportunities for immigrant families' access to early childhood programs. We gathered more than 30 stakeholders, including community advocates, child care and Head Start as well as home visiting providers, refugee resettlement agencies, migrant community organizers, and conducted several interviews with subject matter experts and policymakers. A discussion of our findings is outlined below.

Need for Culturally and Linguistically Fluent Support and Programs

Language Access

Across New York, families are forced to navigate a public education system without adequate access to quality translation and interpretation. Language Access was raised again and again, with every community represented reporting real challenges for families in communicating with their school district in the language they best understand.

While language access issues occur across other systems as well, participants reported the most noteworthy issues with their public school system.

Although Buffalo has made some progress, one community leader there explained that interpreters “can sometimes be not competent. Or they will try to answer for the family. Many interpreters don’t understand how to read and write in their language.” A fellow Buffalo-based participant added “When it’s online or over the phone it’s even worse.” In Central New York, there was widespread interest in increasing access to services and improving the quality of those services. One community leader in

Central New York reported “a lot of deficit with language access because of the diversity of languages” and another noted problems with interpreters “not knowing the technical terms” needed to accurately translate. On Long Island, one community leader who works with the Latinx community lamented how clerical staff with bilingual abilities can be overloaded, which creates difficult situations for the staff member and for parents. She also raised real concerns about the depth of language access services provided, noting that many schools will have documents and robo-calls in Spanish, but the challenge comes when the parent calls regarding a topic that requires a live conversation, which causes communication to break down, leaving the parent frustrated. Community leaders and service providers reported hearing from school districts that they lacked funding for supporting language access services, weren’t logistically able to provide them, and were challenged by the diversity of languages represented in their communities. A family advocate on Long Island noted the impact of these issues: “Families who don’t speak Spanish can’t be their own advocates if there is no one there to interpret for them.”

Education is the only area excluded from New York State’s Language Access Executive Order. Executive Order 26, signed in 2011, directs executive state agencies that provide direct public services to offer language assistance services (translation and interpretation) to people of Limited English Proficiency (LEP).¹⁷ Thus, outside of any local language access orders or policy, and outside specific areas where language access provisions are specified by the State Education Department within Commissioner’s Regulations¹⁸, families rely on Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI requires school districts to “take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their

programs and activities by LEP persons” in order to avoid discriminating on the grounds of national origin. In 2015, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), who share authority for enforcing Title VI in the education context, provided further guidance on how school districts could conform to these obligations, including direction on how to provide language assistance programs.¹⁹

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The State Education Department has made clear, meaningful efforts to translate state level parent-facing documents it develops for parents of multilingual learners in particular and together with members of the Board of Regents, has had a true commitment to immigrant families. Findings from the needs assessments show that districts and schools often lack their own effective systems for providing reliable, quality services essential for empowering parents.

Systems Navigation Support

Groups reported that across multiple systems — Pre-K, Head Start and child care

programs — and across regions of the state, the application and enrollment process required familiarity with US systems and ability to navigate complex processes. In Buffalo, a community leader reported the following regarding families' experiences with Pre-K: "Immigrant and refugee families just don't know the process for enrollment. The first priority for a lot of families is their kids' education." One refugee resettlement agency in Syracuse raised similar concerns, stating that "a lot of [immigrant] families don't get seats because they don't understand the

system and the seats fill up too quickly" for them to compete. Organizers working with migrant families also reported families facing serious challenges navigating the complexities of income and other requirements for child care and Head Start programs.

These realities pose substantial barriers to immigrant families that lack tailored support. In the absence of such support, many newcomers rely on family and friends to share information informally on the early childhood system and enrollment processes. While formal peer-to-peer mentoring has been found



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helpful and effective as part of comprehensive navigational assistance provided by refugee resettlement agencies in Central New York, word-of-mouth is not an effective support system. One leader who works with migrant families in Western New York illustrated the need for formal support to help families access programs: “A lot of families I visit are the only Spanish-speaking family in the vicinity. They are extremely isolated... Lack of access to programs is also an issue.”

Groups reported opportunities to better engage families in understanding programs and eligibility criteria and to assist families in completing applications (particularly if the application is done online) and marshalling all the documentation necessary to enroll. Concerns regarding proving residency were particularly noteworthy in New York City, where families applying to Pre-K are often hesitant to reveal “doubled up” housing situations for fear they could get in trouble. Having a child with a disability adds substantial additional complexity for immigrant families to navigate, particularly given the intricacies of the Early Intervention and special education systems and the possibility that their home country may have no similar support system. As one leader in Buffalo noted, “parents often come from countries that don’t have services for students with special needs so they just don’t know what’s out there.”

Immigrant-serving organizations and those individuals with the capacity to serve immigrant communities play key roles in bolstering immigrant family access to early childhood programs as liaisons, translators, and amenders of misinformation.

- The New York Immigration Coalition’s Linking Immigrant Families to Early Childhood Education (LIFE) Project, launched in December 2017, has raised private funds in order for grassroots immigrant groups to provide

comprehensive support to aid immigrant families in accessing free 3-K and Pre-K programs in New York City. The project supported more than 100 families in applying for these programs in its inaugural year, two out of three of which said they would not have applied without the community group’s assistance.

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- Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) play vital roles helping connect families with care, in addition to supporting child care providers with training and technical assistance in languages families and providers best understand.
- Syracuse’s public school system has six “Nationality Workers” hired from the communities that they serve to support families, including with initial enrollment.

More broadly, since 2011, Help Me Grow, a collaboration of cross-sector regional and state organizations in New York, has served the families of children ages 0-5 years in the eight counties of Western NY and two counties on Long Island, and is now in Onondaga County as well. In Buffalo and on Long Island, participants identified Help Me Grow as a key resource for families accessing a range of community resources and child

developmental information and services. However, the organization's capacity is limited — on Long Island, for example, a single person helps the entire Island.

Never has there been greater need for culturally and linguistically fluent systems to encourage and help families access care and programs given widespread fear among immigrant families due to the deeply divisive national climate around immigrants. On Long Island, for example, where the MS-13 gang has garnered national media attention and there has been increased pressure from the Trump administration to crack down on gang violence, as well as in other areas of the state including New York City, immigrant families fear leaving their homes to perform routine tasks such as grocery shopping and taking their children to school. Some program providers that serve immigrant families have these fears themselves. Individuals that families have traditionally relied on to access services are also part of this web of anxiety. On Long Island, one leader noted that when parents seek documentation necessary for enrollment they're encountering landlords and employers who used to verify salary and residence and are no longer doing it. "It is sometimes bias but also sometimes just fear from the employer/landlord about repercussions for sharing info." The news around federal public charge rules²⁰ is adding to a sense of persecution among immigrant families across the state and discouraging them from accessing services and programs in general, further exacerbating the situation.

Participants underscored that this understandable fear will have a lasting impact on children and their families, who may have escaped persecution and trauma in their home countries only to find themselves under severe duress here as well. This trauma broadly effects their lives, including of course how they engage with early childhood programs.

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Culturally and Linguistically Fluent Programs

Given the dynamics outlined above, in order to fully support children and youth and engage immigrant families, early childhood programs themselves need to be culturally fluent and celebrate families' home languages and cultures. Immigrant families are seeking caregivers and educators who share the culture, values, and languages of the families they serve. Community leaders across the state identified opportunities for growth in this area:

- Families and community leaders were very interested in bilingual Pre-K programs and viewed them as necessary for districts to harness the full developmental potential of young immigrant children.
- Low pay for child care providers was cited as driving turnover of culturally fluent staff.
- Anti-bias training was noted as an opportunity to support communities in welcoming immigrant families.

- Refugee community leaders in particular recognized that not all families will choose center based care and may be more comfortable with trusted, culturally fluent home-based care within their communities. One refugee service provider noted that this is an opportunity for economic mobility for mothers in the community if they get support to navigate the complexities of becoming a licensed provider.

Transportation Access and Proximity to Programs

In every region of New York we targeted, the proximity of programs and availability of transportation to programs was at least a major issue and sometimes an insurmountable barrier to accessing early childhood programs.

For those in cities, proximity of child care programs and Pre-K classrooms to home served as a key factor in pursuing enrollment for eligible families. In Buffalo, parents' frustrations with transportation was a major parent concern reported by multiple community leaders across program areas. Not only do transportation issues impact families' ability to get children to programs, transportation barriers prevent parents from visiting children's schools, complicating engagement in their children's educations. Families with multiple children under age five or those with jobs that start at a similar time to programs found it difficult to coordinate child drop off and pick up schedules in the absence of available seats at a logistically feasible program. Service providers and CBOs in New York City similarly reported that when discussing education options with families, one of the top considerations in addition to quality is distance from their home. Families often preferred public school settings

because of the benefits of coordinating drop offs and pick-ups for their children. Programs located farther than walking distance also require families to rely on public transportation, which often is unreliable, inefficient, and costly.

In 2019 New York State commendably extended access to driver's licenses to 400,000 undocumented New Yorkers, removing an enormous obstacle families faced. However, for immigrant families outside of cities, in suburban areas and rural areas in particular, transportation issues still abound as public transportation is often non-existent or completely inadequate. Programs are less likely to be within walking distance, and owning an insured car is a financial challenge. Community leaders and service providers on Long Island reported families experiencing acute transportation barriers compounded by the impossible choices all poor families must make between food, housing, and having a car. Grassroots leaders from Utica and the greater Syracuse area also noted transportation as a key factor in immigrant and refugee families not enrolling in programs.

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Even with a valid driver's license, families living on Long Island, in Western and Central New York, and in New York City alike live with the daily fear of being separated by U.S. Customs & Border Patrol (CBP). For families who live within 100 miles of the U.S. border (which includes a majority of New Yorkers), CBP has jurisdiction to stop and search anyone with "reasonable suspicion", which is loosely defined and often ignored.²¹

Availability of Programs

Throughout our conversations, community groups expressed a need for additional capacity to serve immigrant families in early childhood programs that have particular value in integrating and supporting immigrant families with young children.

Participants relayed that home visiting programs are unable to meet tremendous demand among immigrant families. Immigrant families benefit enormously from culturally and linguistically fluent home visiting programs tailored to serve immigrant families' needs. These programs help parents integrate into their communities and American systems, strengthen relationships with their child, and fuel their children's language and early literacy development. In Buffalo, one home visiting provider at a refugee and immigrant organization noted that even without any recruitment efforts, they have 50 children on their waiting list. In a second home visiting program also serving Buffalo families, there were more than 100 families seeking services beyond what dedicated funding allows. Across New York, only 5% of approximately 280,000 of all eligible children are served.²² Research shows that immigrant and refugee families

access home visiting programs at even lower rates.²³

Recognizing the inseparable correlation between thriving parents and thriving young children, service providers also noted a pressing need for more programs that offer English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes to immigrant parents within a programmatic approach that supports both parents' and children's development. The translation and interpretation crisis in New York's schools would not be so acute if there weren't a simultaneous, longstanding crisis in access to adult ESOL classes. In New York only 3% of the 3.5 million New Yorkers who lack their high school diploma, English proficiency, or both are able to access state-funded adult literacy programs.²⁴ But the issue extends beyond just capacity for any ESOL seat — programs that take a whole family approach and encompass high quality

Only 3% of the 3.5 million New Yorkers in need are able to access state-funded adult literacy programs.

programs to support children's development are indispensable. Program leaders in Western New York and Central New York underscored the practical imperative of this approach as well, citing the case of a mother who wants to take English classes but waits 6 years to do so until her children are in school.

New York's migrant families face distinct challenges accessing quality care and education programs. The Agri-Business Child Development (ABCD) program, run by the New York State Federation of Growers' & Processors' Associations, Inc., serves the

children of New York's farmworking families from eight weeks through school age. It was created in 1946 for crop farmers with young children, with eligibility criteria set to serve families who migrate throughout the year to tend and harvest seasonal crops and has not kept pace with current needs. Currently, most funding comes from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, the Office of Head Start, and the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. Other options, such as Head Start, center-based child care, or Pre-K programs are often unavailable as well, due to transportation access, confusing applications, and income requirements, leaving these families without options. Participants also reported an opportunity to more closely connect the ABCD program with the farmworker education program, which serves ages 3-21.

More broadly, New York's early childhood programs have real gaps in capacity that impact immigrant families, just as they profoundly impact families outside of the immigrant community. Although in New York City nearly all four year-olds have access to public Pre-K, throughout the rest of the state over 80,000 eligible children still lack access to quality, full-day Pre-K.²⁵ For example, in Buffalo, service providers reported families, especially those of ELLs, having to wait a year or longer for a Pre-K seat. Community leaders reported parents having to put their children in different schools because of a lack of spots. On Long Island, a child care leader explained that "less than 30% of families on Long Island have access to public Pre-K — in addition, childcare eligibility is high and the cost for private care is astronomical."

Across New York, public early childhood programs consistently fill up leaving almost half of New York's three- and four-year olds with only costly, private options. Working

families earning up to 200% of the federal poverty guidelines are eligible for financial assistance to help cover the cost of care, but 80% of families eligible for child care assistance — 4 out of 5 — are denied support.²⁶ This is particularly problematic given that according to a 2016 survey, child care for four year olds in New York ranks as the second most expensive in the country.²⁷ On average, families in New York spend over \$27,000 for center-based and \$21,000 for

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family-based child care per child, annually.²⁸ That cost equates to approximately 14% of dual-income family earnings- and was reported to account for over 30% of family incomes in certain parts of the state. Another child care leader on Long Island added that, "the cost of living is so high, the poverty line for a family of four is \$25,000 but survival costs are actually \$85,000. Access to care from a resource perspective

and deciding what basic need can be covered is often the priority.”

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Children at preschool on the Lower East Side, Manhattan, NYC.
Photographer: David Grossman / Alamy Stock Photo

Recommendations

Support Families' Integration by Investing in Two-Generation Programs

In order to empower families to navigate the education and child care systems and bolster their children's development, New York should expand access to two-generation programs. These programs simultaneously catalyze parents' integration and fuel both parents' and young children's success. By addressing the needs of parents and their young children simultaneously, two-generation programs have great potential to uplift whole families and break cycles of intergenerational poverty and isolation.²⁹ Home visiting programs, described above in the needs assessment section, and family literacy programs described below, are two proven programs supporting the whole family.

- **Increase Investment in Home Visiting Programs and Focus on Robustly Serving Immigrant Families:** Funding should acknowledge both the gap in access to services for immigrant families and also the incredible opportunity culturally and linguistically responsive programs offer to fuel both parents' and children's success.

- The state should substantially increase funding for home visiting models shown to be effective in serving immigrant families.

- Immigrant- and refugee-related indicators should be added in New York's Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program needs assessment (due by October 1, 2020), which is essential for channeling MIECHV funding to serve these families. For example, Massachusetts included indicators to help identify at-risk communities including the share of students whose first language is not English; individuals with limited English proficiency; foreign-born mothers; and refugees and asylees.
- Research should also be conducted on effective models and practices for engaging immigrant and refugee families to strengthen the evidence base and support replication of proven approaches.

- **Invest \$25M Annually to Support Adult Literacy Funding within a Two Generation Framework:** In New York State, there are over 3.5 million individuals who lack a high school diploma, English language proficiency, or both. Of the 970,000 parents of dual language learners in New York, 42% are limited English proficient.³⁰ Adult Literacy funding is currently dependant upon the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which focuses too heavily on high school equivalency and workforce outcomes. Additional funding allows for expanded

Recommendations

outcomes and adult literacy programming like the English Plus Integration (EPI) Model that support whole family success.

- Adult education models such as the English Plus Integration (EPI) Model maintain a central focus on English language acquisition while assisting students in a wide range of integration topics necessary to long-term success, equipping individuals with digital literacy skills to support continued education, and supporting students in creating individual and family success plans prior to program exit. These skills are integral to supporting the parents of young children.

- **Invest \$10M in Family Literacy Programs**

Annually: Family Literacy programs, which have been chaotically stripped of their funding over the past years despite their enormous value, are a proven approach to supporting a whole family's educational success. These programs often provide adult basic literacy contextualized to needs and interests of parents and English for adults, along with child literacy programs, time for parents and children together to help parents learn how to support their children's learning, and parental support through life skills development and other areas. Family literacy programs support increased family engagement over the long term, a critical factor in children's success. Family literacy programs have been shown to increase family engagement and literacy skills³¹, improve children's verbal and non-verbal engagement in reading activities³², and increase children's school attendance records, reading levels, and reading proficiency³³

- A \$10 million annual investment will allow for approximately 32 community based organizations to expand or launch family literacy programs for roughly 900 families throughout the State. It will also support capacity-building grants for 16 organizations, which will cover community needs assessments, planning, development of partnerships, definitions of family outcomes, and staff training.

- **Create Two Generation Taskforce:** NYSED should leverage their committed adult education and multilingual learner teams and convene a Taskforce that includes stakeholders focused on addressing the needs of parents of young children.

Improve Language Access for Immigrant Families

Across New York State community leaders expressed a consistent, strong need for better language access. Currently, these services do not adequately reflect the state's language diversity, leaving many families without a way to access programs and unable to engage if they have found a way to enroll.

- **Provide Support to Districts:** All of NYSED's Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages' (OBEWL) public facing documents are translated into at least 10 languages and sometimes more. NYSED should build on OBEWL's commitment to language access and give districts practical support around providing language access for immigrant families. This support should include sharing best practice strategies, identifying existing sources of funding as well as how districts

can meet their federal obligations. OBEWL recognizes these issues, and we look forward to continuing to partner with them to implement these strategies.

- **Strengthen Department-Wide Practices:** NYSED has made some progress expanding translation and interpretation across the department. However, NYSED would benefit from more consistent practices, policies and budget for the agency as a whole to ensure addressing language access needs becomes routine. Provide \$1.5M to support NYSED in this important work.
- **Fully Fund Foundation Aid Annually to Increase Funding for Schools:** School Districts should have access to increased funding in order to more broadly expand quality services for families. Annually fully funding Foundation Aid, which has not happened in more than 10 years, will provide schools with badly needed essential resources, including for language access services. Schools must be supported in meeting their legal obligations.

Facilitate Systems Navigation with Culturally and Linguistically Fluent Practices

We will not achieve equitable representation in programs with immense value for children's development without helping immigrant families navigate complex systems.

- **Partner with CBOs to Drive Equitable Access:** Districts should use existing family engagement dollars and/or re-allocate program advertising dollars

to partner with organizations that have expertise serving immigrants on outreach and support to ensure that all families with age-eligible children have an opportunity to apply for Pre-K programs in particular. These partnerships should be an enduring component of the district's enrollment infrastructure and successful strategies to support immigrant families identified through these partnerships should be replicated across all school staff supporting families with enrollment.

- This system should leverage established immigrant-serving organizations which have the trust of their communities and specialized expertise supporting their individual migrant, refugee and other newcomer communities. These groups are well positioned to support families' integration into the education system in the process and help empower them to engage in their children's education over the longer term.

- **Create an Integrated System of Navigators:** This system should provide comprehensive support in understanding and accessing child development, care and program options and resources. The system must be culturally and linguistically fluent and incorporate partners immigrant communities trust.

Develop Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Programs

In order to fully develop immigrant children's potential, programs must be prepared

Recommendations

to support multilingual development and incorporate practices that honor families' identities and backgrounds.

- **Revise Universal Pre-K Regulations to Support Emergent Multilingual Learner (EMLL) Identification:** New York does not yet require a process for children who speak a language other than English to be formally identified in Pre-K. This is a fundamental barrier to developing appropriate programs and policies to sustain children's home language. Maintaining the home language is critical if children are to reap the expanded cognitive development that comes with being bilingual and if children and their parents are to remain connected through their home language. It is also an imperative if New York State is to have the economic benefits of a multilingual workforce. *Revise the Commissioner's Regulations, Section 151.1, to mandate the identification of children enrolled in Pre-K who speak languages other than English in their homes as "Emergent Multilingual Learners."* These revisions should reflect input from the field.
- **Support EMLL Language Profile Protocol:** Invest \$1.6M for Regional Early Learning Technical Assistance Centers to help support statewide implementation of NYSED's very strong protocol to identify emergent multilingual learners (EMLLs) in Pre-K in order to ensure quality data are available to support program alignment and funding. Educators will need professional development and resources to effectively implement the protocol. This protocol is an invaluable tool to support educators in implementing best practices relative to the role of home language for instruction and programming. It also provides insights relevant to supporting effective family engagement approaches.
- **Fuel Home Language Development:** Expand access to programs that support home language development in both bilingual and super-diverse classrooms where many different home languages are represented. State agencies and school districts can play roles in identifying effective strategies, creating materials, and underscoring the value of leveraging families' cultural knowledge to create culturally relevant programs. Recent reports by the Migration Policy Institute³⁴ on innovative teaching practices and models to support the learning and development of young dual language learners in "super-diverse" settings provide insight on promising approaches. The New York City Department of Education's Core Principles for Supporting Emergent Multilingual Learners (EMLLs) is also an excellent resource.³⁵
- **Ensure Access to Bilingual Educators and Teachers from Diverse Backgrounds:** Develop robust career pathways, leveraging the cultural and linguistic expertise among existing providers and successful programs, as well as parents. Aligned coursework and degrees are also important, as is affordability of pursuing them to ensure that teachers from the communities they serve can access programs. As an initial step, invest \$2.5M in a birth-to-grade-three teacher preparation program and birth-grade 12 leader preparation programs. The state must also address sustainable wages to support a diverse, qualified workforce.

Recommendations

- **Provide Professional Development:** *Related to ensuring access to bilingual educators and providers, the state must increase linguistically accessible professional development opportunities for early care and learning providers, assistant providers, center staff, and school staff and leaders that focus on embracing multilingualism and meeting the needs of young immigrant children and their families. Access must be available across all settings to ensure that home-based providers remain a choice for families who prefer this setting.*
- **Bolster Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies:** *Increase funding for CCR&Rs to \$5M to ensure that it keeps pace with the cost of providing community-based trainings in the home language of the provider and other critical supports such as linguistically and culturally responsive support for families in accessing child care.*
- **Intervention to Preschool Special Education and specifically address issues of gaps in cultural and linguistic fluency.**
- **Expand New York's Voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System:** *Expand coverage of QUALITYStars, which gives "ratings" for early care and learning programs in New York and supports programs with improving quality. This investment should include additional center-based and regulated family-based child care programs.*
- **Develop an Integrated Data System at Birth:** *Create a system that all agencies have access to, that includes child-specific, program-level, and workforce-level data, that will improve program coordination across agencies and support community-level efforts to coordinate early childhood services.*
- **Robustly Invest in Pre-K Programs:** *Ensure that children outside of New York City have access to full day Pre-K programs by substantially increasing investments.*

Strengthen Infrastructure Necessary for Programs that Meet Immigrant Families' Needs

- **Support Children with Developmental Delays Through Taskforce and Better Reimbursement Rates for Service Providers:** *The state should increase reimbursement rates for Early Intervention services. In addition, NYSED and DOH should partner together to create a taskforce to resolve current challenges in transitioning from Early*
- **Expand Access to Child Care:** *Expand access to high-quality childcare so that families who are low-income with infants and toddlers who qualify for child care assistance receive it and are able to enroll in high-quality early childhood programs.*
- **Increase Transportation Access Especially for Those in Rural Areas:** *Service providers expressed a dire need for expanded transportation services for their immigrant families who, in many cases, lack vehicles and access to reliable public transportation. These*

Recommendations

issues are broad and impact ability to participate in multiple programs. New York State took a huge leap forward with providing immigrant families with access to driver's licenses. It also took a step forward by including transportation in an increase in reimbursements in the budget enacted in 2019³⁶, but more needs to be done to build transportation infrastructure.

New York's immigrant families and their young children have enormous potential. We thank New York State for the steps it has taken to support early childhood education, and specifically commend the New York State Education Department for its work on behalf of multilingual learners of all ages. Given that 43% of young children come from families with a parent who speaks a language other than English, there is much at stake in leveraging these families' strengths and meeting their needs. The NYIC looks forward to continuing to partner with the state on strategies recommended in this report and others to ensure that our youth and their parents thrive.

Endnotes

- 1 <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/NY>.
- 2 <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/NY>.
- 3 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/DLL-FactSheet-NY-FINAL.pdf>
- 4 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/DLL-FactSheet-NY-FINAL.pdf>
- 5 <https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/PSDAP.pdf>
- 6 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5399246/>
- 7 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/DLL-FactSheet-NY-FINAL.pdf>
- 8 <https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/PSDAP.pdf>
- 9 Four year, August graduation rate. <https://data.nysed.gov/>
- 10 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/DLL-FactSheet-NY-FINAL.pdf>
- 11 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/home-visiting-immigrant-dual-language-learner-families>
- 12 <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/94546/child-care-choices-of-low-income-immigrant-families-with-young-children.pdf>
- 13 Initiative co-chaired by former State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia and former State University of New York Chancellor Nancy Zimpher.
- 14 Workgroup co-chaired by Regents Dr. Luis O. Reyes and Dr. Lester W. Young, Jr. Dr. Betty A. Rosa is Chancellor of the New York State Board of Regents.
- 15 <https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/ECWGBRC%20Report%20-%20Recommendations%20with%20Fiscal%20Implications.pdf>
- 16 <http://www.nysed.gov/bilingual-ed/emergent-multilingual-learners-prekindergarten-programs>
- 17 <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/no-26-statewide-language-access-policy>
- 18 Particularly importantly, translation and interpretation provisions related to the multilingual learner identification process are specified within CR Part 154.
- 19 <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf>
- 20 According to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services website, a public charge is “an individual who is likely to become primarily dependent on the government for subsistence, as demonstrated by either the receipt of public cash assistance for income maintenance or institutionalization for long-term care at government expense”. In August 2019, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) attempted to change and expand the long-standing “public charge” rule, but as of publication, nationwide injunctions stopped the rule changes from going into effect. Information and resources available at: <https://www.nyc.org/our-work/campaigns/fight-attacks-on-public-benefits/fight-changes-to-public-charge/>
- 21 <https://www.aclu.org/other/constitution-100-mile-border-zone>
- 22 https://www.parent-child.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2017_CRP-Annual-Report.pdf
- 23 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/home-visiting-immigrant-dual-language-learner-families>
- 24 <https://www.nyccaliteracy.org/>
- 25 https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1ee85d_dc7e8fadfa0d4b6aa33ea43c1c5a032b.pdf
- 26 https://www.scaany.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/The-State-of-Early-Learning-in-NY-2019-Briefing-Guide_2-2019.pdf
- 27 http://www.childcarewestchester.org/pdf/CCA_High_Cost_Report_2016.pdf
- 28 <https://usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/NewYork2017.pdf>
- 29 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/serving-immigrant-families-through-two-generation-programs-identifying-family-needs-and>
- 30 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/DLL-FactSheet-NY-FINAL.pdf>
- 31 Cramer, J. (2016). From theory to outcomes: NCFL’s two-generation movement for families. National Center for Families Learning.
- 32 Barbre, J.G. (2003). Effects of an early childhood education program with parent involvement on oral language acquisition (Doctoral Dissertation, Pepperdine University). Available at <http://bit.ly/2lBeWbW>
- 33 Levesque, J.A. (2017). The Collective Impact of Social Innovation on a Two-Generation Learning Program with Hispanic/Latino Families in Detroit. Collective Impact. National Center for Families Learning.
- 34 See The Language of the Classroom: Dual Language Learners in Head Start, Public Pre-K and Private Preschool Programs and Supporting Dual Language Learner Success in Superdiverse PreK-3 Classrooms: The Sobrato Early Academic Language Model available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/new-reports-spotlight-innovative-teaching-practices-and-models-support-learning-and-development>
- 35 https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/emll-core-principles.pdf?sfvrsn=84952a93_2
- 36 <https://www.libertyk12.org/approved-state-budget-increases-education-funding-by-1-billion/>



Mother's Day, Sunset Park neighborhood of Brooklyn, NY.
Photographer: Ethel Wolfovitz / Alamy Stock Photo



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