

A photograph of two young girls walking towards school. The girl on the left is older, with dark curly hair and glasses, wearing a yellow shirt and brown overalls, carrying a book. The girl on the right is younger, also with dark curly hair, wearing a blue dress with white lace and a red backpack, also carrying a book. They are holding hands and walking on a sidewalk in front of a school building.

Stronger Together: Integrating Dual Language and Special Education for Multilingual Learners/ELs with Disabilities

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Session Outcomes

- Describe the legal and ethical obligations to provide both English language development and special education services to ELs with IEPs.
- Identify the core components of effective, dual-service (BIL & SPED) instructional practices.
- Analyze our current practices to identify areas of collaboration and opportunities.

Agenda

- Context for Learning:
 - Who are English Learners with IEPs or Dually Identified students?
- Legal foundations
- Why Dual services matter?
 - Case Study
- Collaboration Considerations
 - IEP review
- Next steps

Anticipation Guide on Legal Foundations

- Take out your laptops, phone, ipads
- Take the anticipation guide-**You can turn and talk** with your tablemates about the questions.
- Complete the [Legal Foundations](#) survey

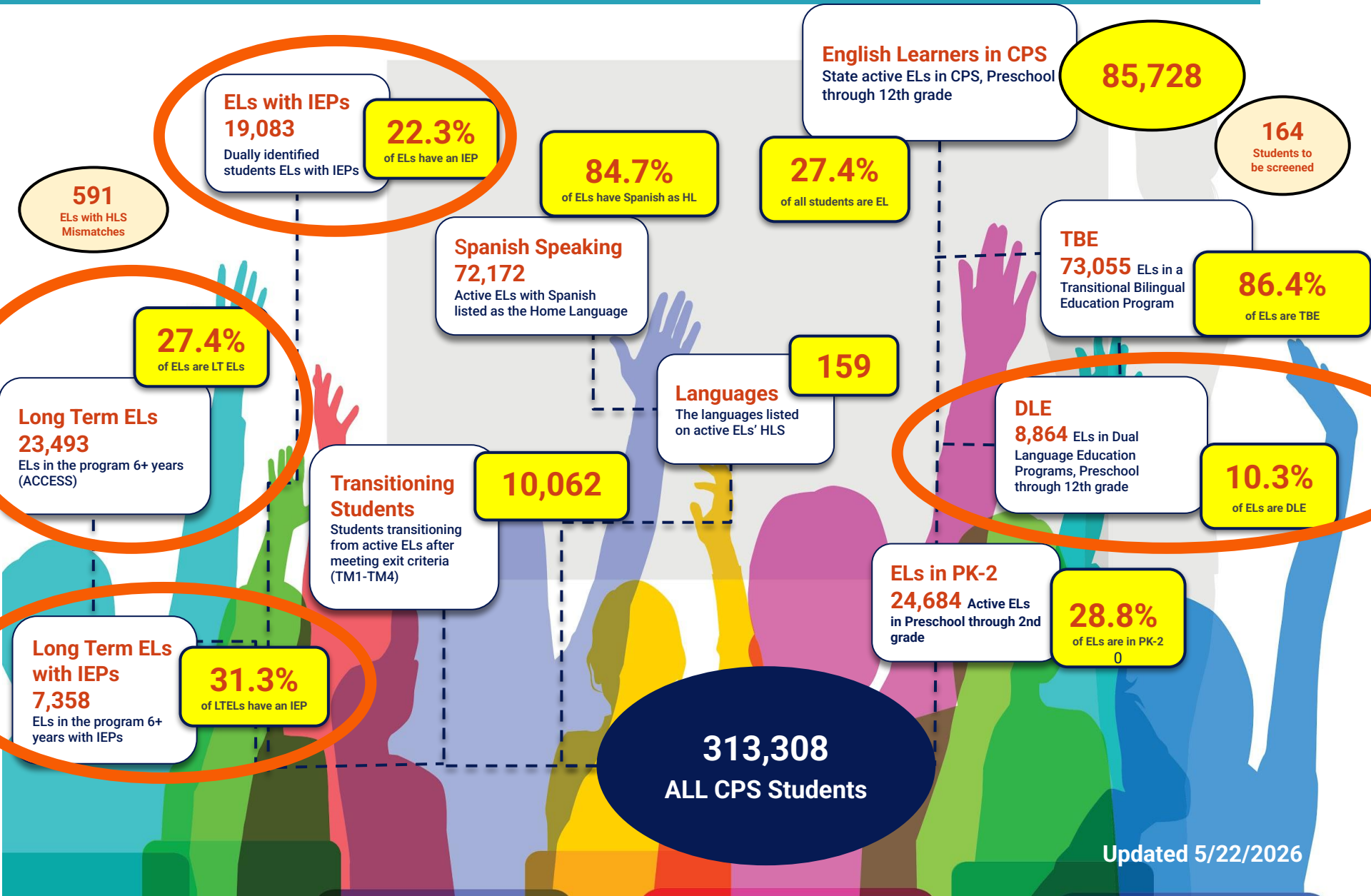




Context for Learning:

Who are English Learners
with IEPs or Dually
Identified students?

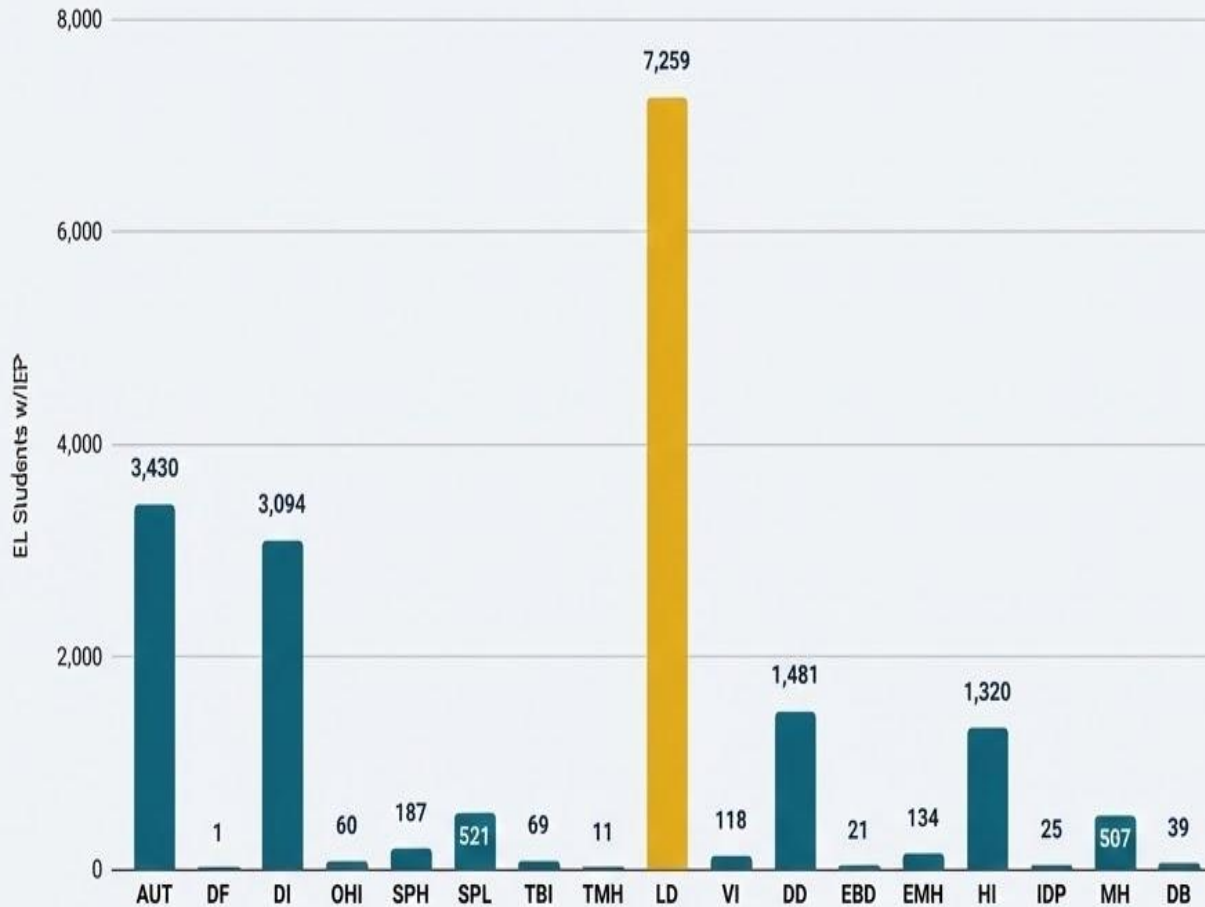
SY26 English Learners (ELs) in CPS



SY26 District Data: ELs w/IEP Primary Disability

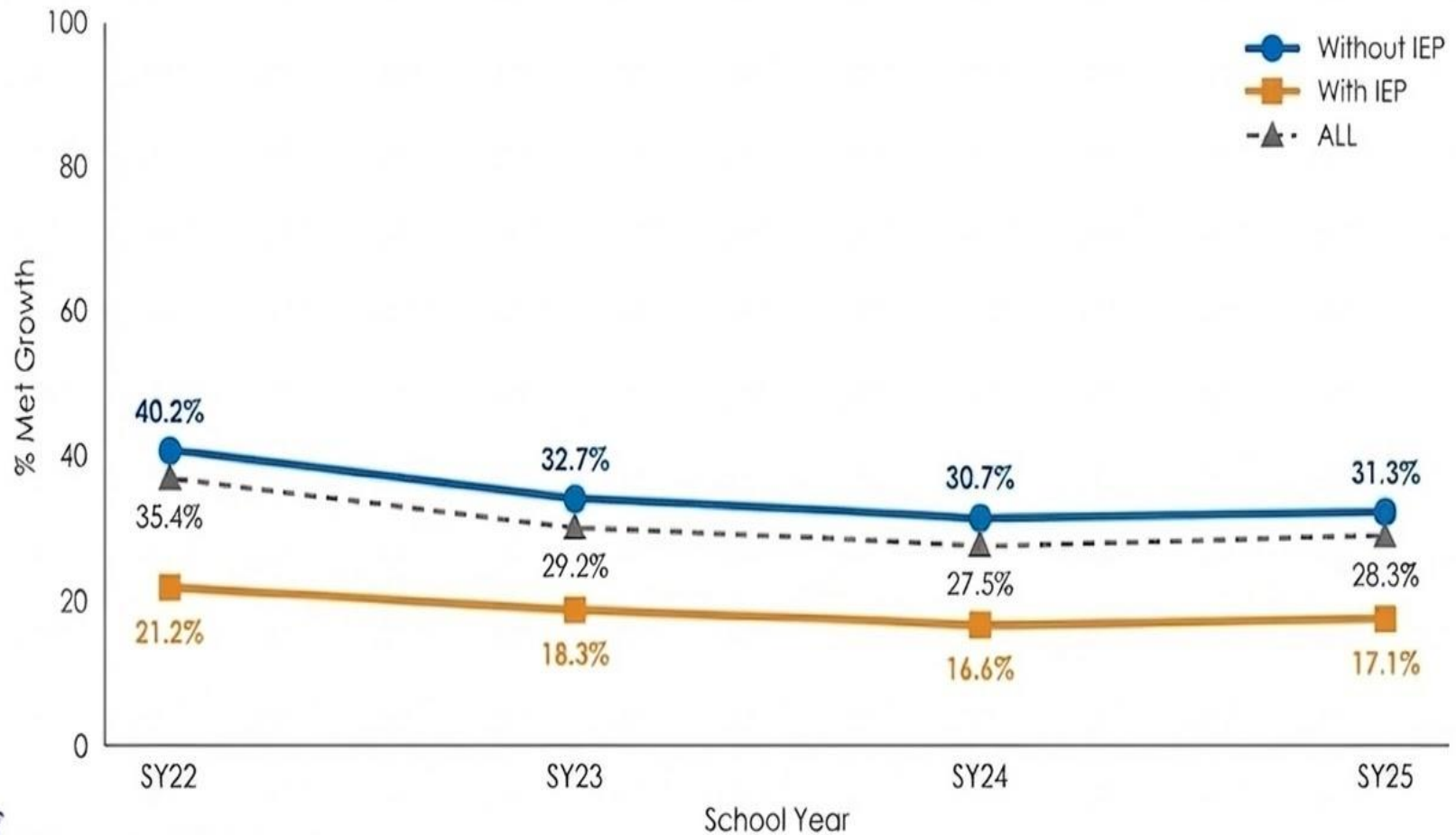
Data as of 12/5/25

EL Students w/IEP Primary Disabilities

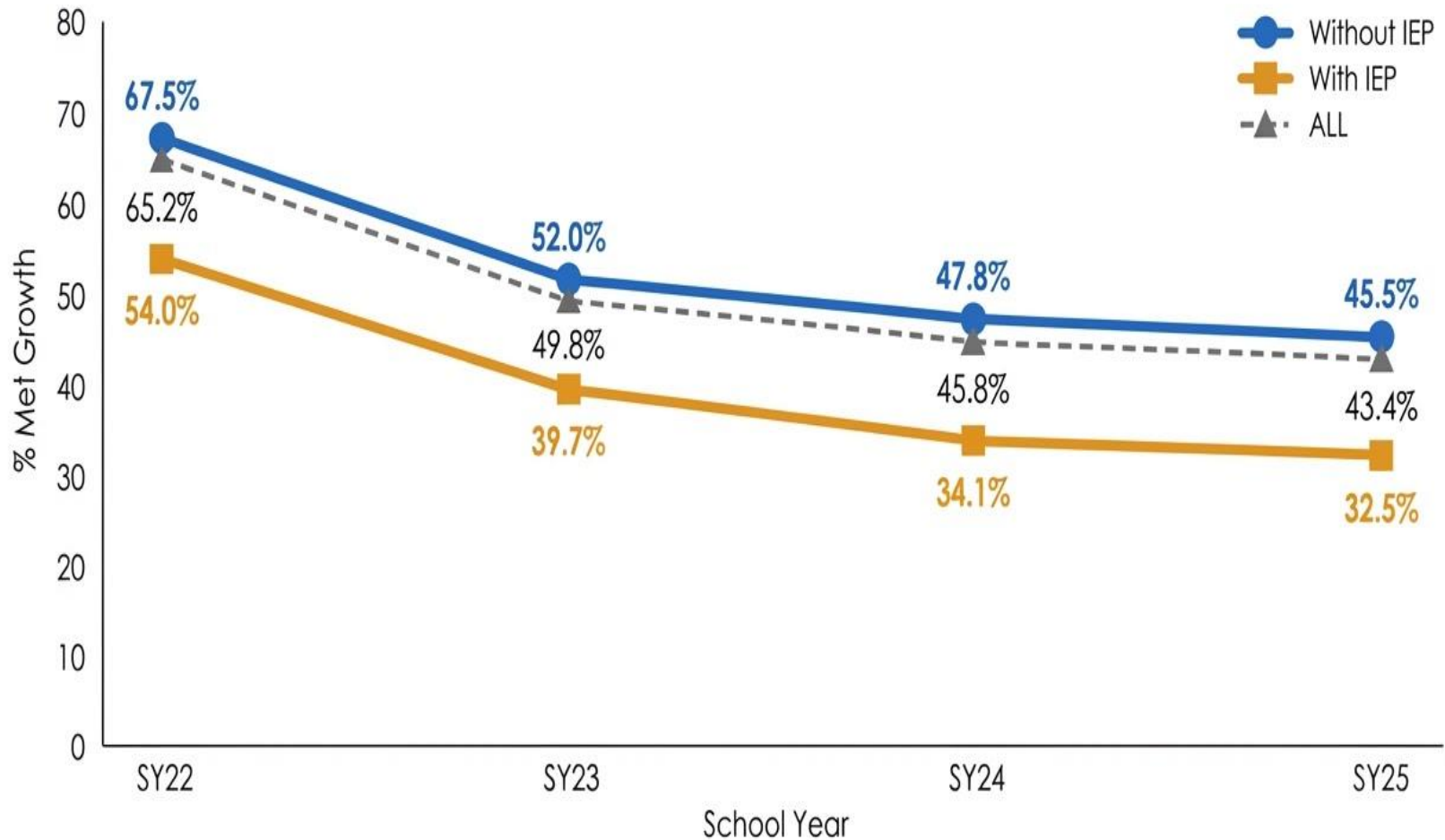


SSM Code	Primary Disability Type
AUT	Autism
DB	Deaf/Blindness
DD	Developmental Delay
DF	Deafness
EBD	Emotional Disability
HI	Hearing Impairment
EMH	Intellectual Disability - Mild
TMH	Intellectual Disability - Moderate
IDP	Intellectual Disability - Profound
SPH	Intellectual Disability - Severe
LD	Specific Learning Disability
MH	Multiple Disabilities
OHI	Other Health Impairment
PHY	Orthopedic Impairment
SPL	Speech or Language Impairment
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
VI	Visual Impairment

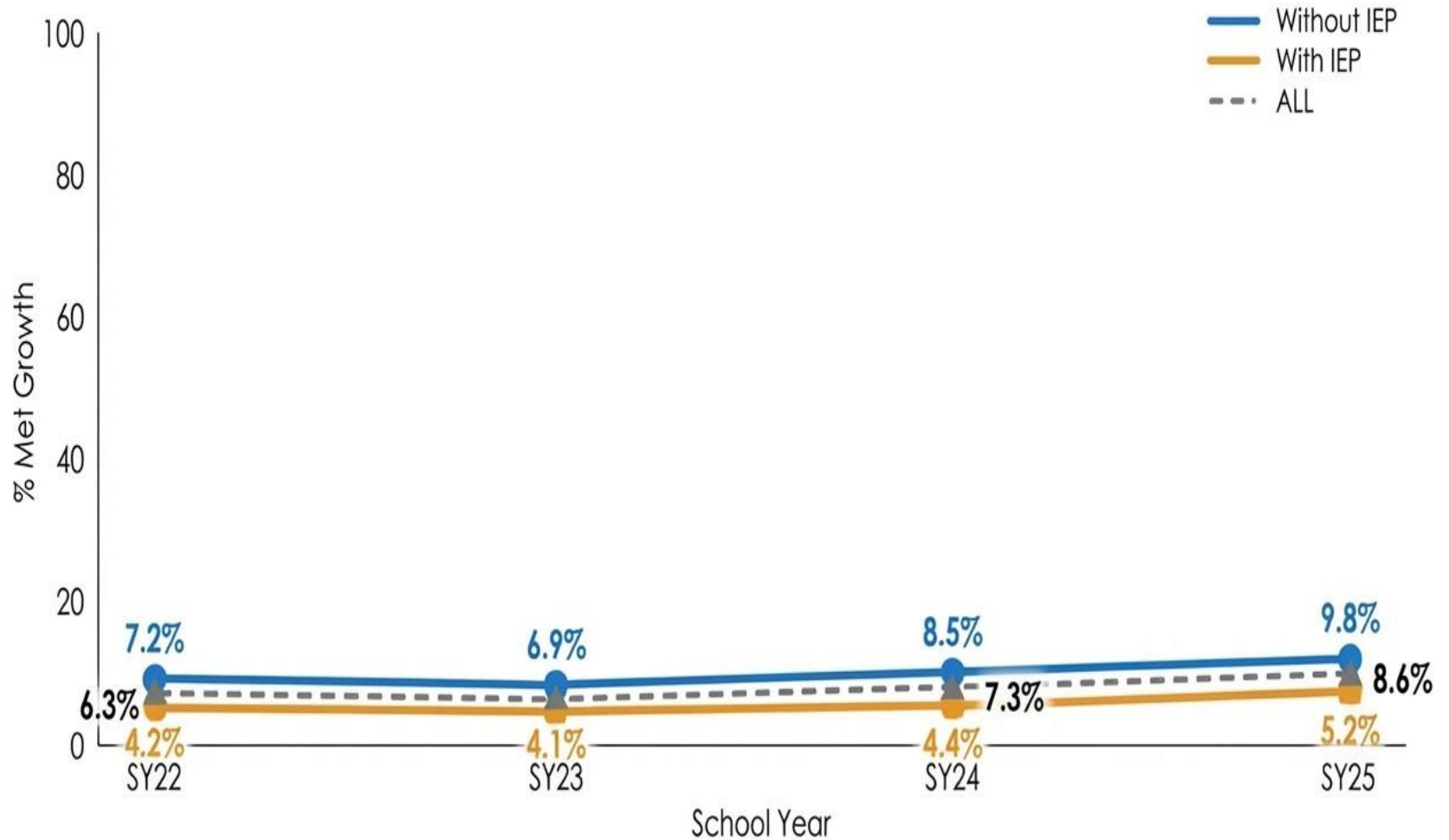
EL Proficiency Progress (ELP+P) % Met Growth: All ELs



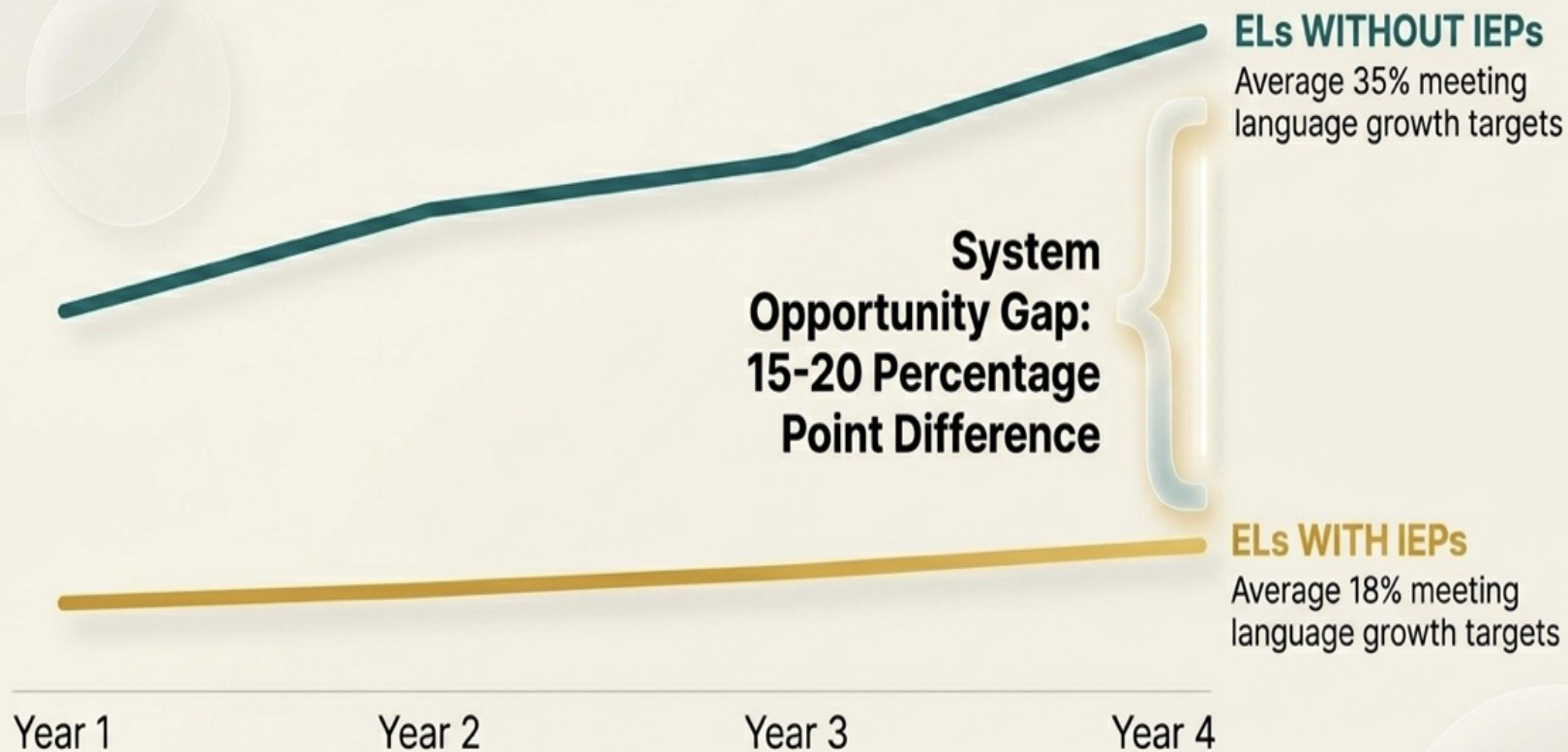
EL Proficiency Progress (ELPiP) % Met Growth: ELPY 2-5 ELs



EL Proficiency Progress (ELP+P) % Met Growth: LT ELs (ELPY 6+)



The System Opportunity Gap



The students receiving the MOST designated services are showing the LEAST language growth.

The “Either/Or” Trap: Where the System Breaks



Why Are ELs with IEPs Falling Behind?



If students are receiving **MORE services** than anyone else in the building, why are they making **LESS language growth**?



Lost bilingual instructional time



Lack of co-planning



Bilingual teachers absent from IEP meetings



Pull-out services during language blocks



Language needs not reflected in IEPs



Goals focused only on disability

Legal Foundations



The Civil Rights Imperative

“Providing the same books or teachers is not equal treatment if students cannot meaningfully access instruction due to language barriers.”

— Lau v. Nichols (1974)

IDEA + Title VI

Language barriers **MUST** be addressed to ensure equal access to education.

CRITICAL VIOLATION

Removing EL instruction once an IEP is in place is a civil rights violation.

Dear Colleague Letter (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2015): Clarifies that ELs with disabilities are entitled to **both sets of services** (special education and language assistance), not one or the other.

The Core Philosophy



“One student holds two protected service entitlements.
They must never lose their right to **dual language instruction** because of a **disability**.

(And they must never lose their disability supports because of language.)

Risks of Denied Opportunities

When **EBwDs** are denied opportunities to participate in bilingual programs, the following consequences emerge:

01. Devaluation of Language

EBwDs/ELswDs language practices and abilities are seen as illegitimate.

02. Denial of Legal Rights

EBwDs/ELswDs do not receive the educational supports they are entitled to under Federal law...

03. Identity Barriers

EBwDs/ELswDs are denied access to bilingual education that supports the development of a healthy bilingual and bicultural identity, since language, cultural practices and identities are interconnected, constantly evolving and shaped by life experiences.

Legal and Ethical Obligations: Anticipation Guide Key

Core Legal Principles

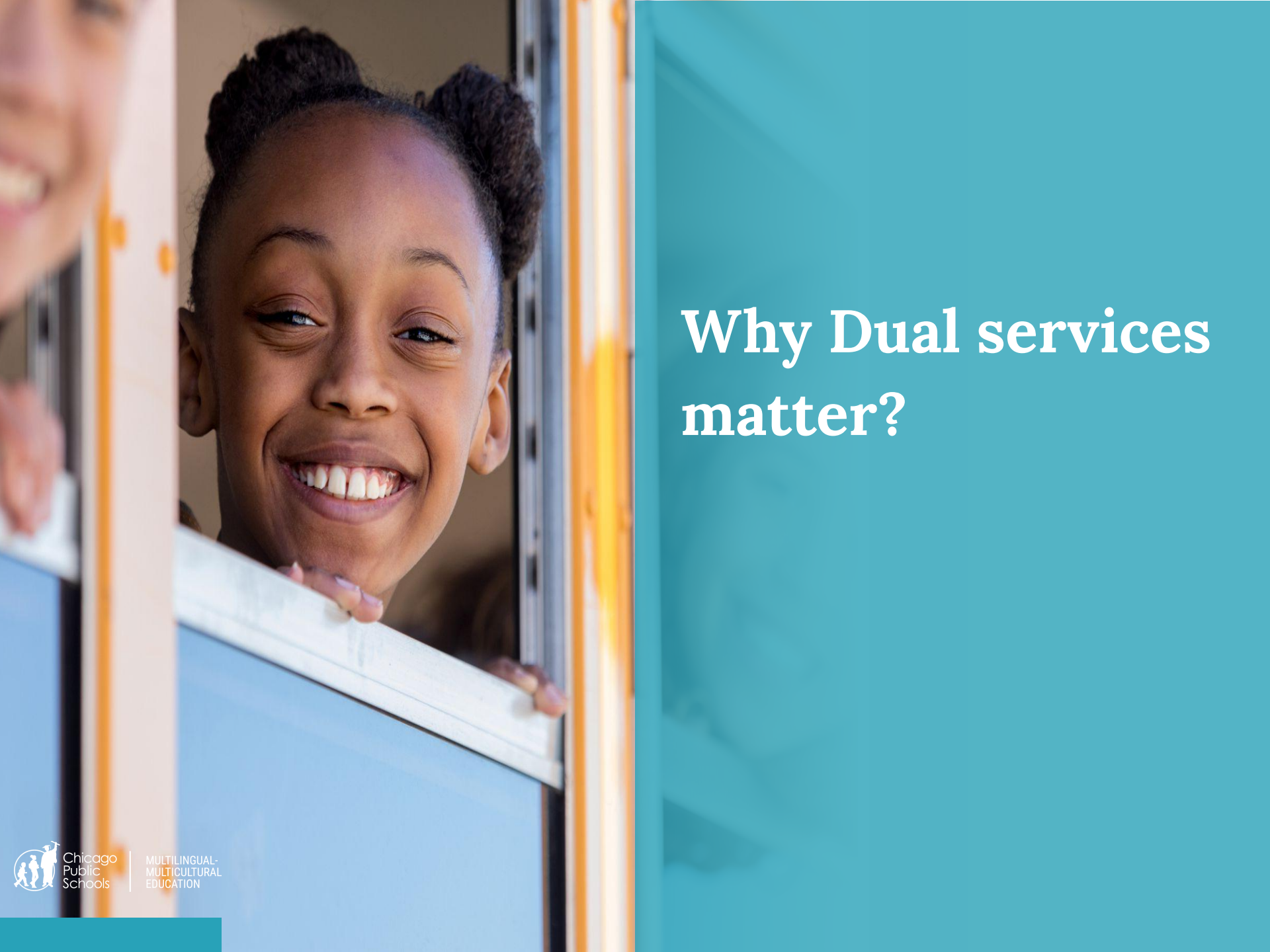
1. **IDEA:** Guarantees eligible children with disabilities a free appropriate public education (FAPE).
2. **Title VI:** Prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin.
3. **Enforcement:** The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) enforces Title VI in schools.
4. **EL Participation:** Schools must take affirmative steps to ensure meaningful and equal participation for English Learners.
5. **Dual Rights:** Students who are both ELs and have disabilities must receive both language and disability-related services.

Fact Check / OCR Guidance

6. **IDEA Audience:** Applies to all students regardless of disability? **False.**
7. **Federal Funds:** English Learners must have equal access to educational programs. **True.**
8. **Service Denial:** ELs can be denied language support if they receive SPED? **False.**
9. **K-12 Scope:** Title VI only applies to colleges? **False.**
10. **Joint Guidance:** OCR issued guidance on supporting ELs and students with disabilities. **True.**

Lau v. Nichols (1974): Supreme Court case establishing that "same" is not "equal." Meaningful language support is a requirement.

****Dear Colleague Letter (2015):*** ELs with disabilities are entitled to **both** sets of services, not one or the other.



Why Dual services matter?



Chicago
Public
Schools

MULTILINGUAL-
MULTICULTURAL
EDUCATION

Redefining Two Services



Risk Assessment

What risks exist if the student loses bilingual instructional time?



Service Delivery

How can the school ensure BOTH Bil/DLE and SPED services are delivered?



Equitable Planning

What would an equitable Individualized Education program (IEP) look like?

The Role of the ... DLE / Bilingual Teacher/ Specialist

Bilingual
Specialist

Key Responsibilities

- Serve as a language specialist for students with disabilities and second language acquisition.
- Provide language development supports to students with disabilities and second language proficiency in English and the home language.
- Share information about language development with the team to ensure effective participation, learning, and performance.
- Collaborate with the team to ensure that language difference from disability is not overlooked.
- Contribute language-focused data to the PLAAFP and IEP development.
- Recommend language development supports, accommodations, and modifications.
- Monitor language development progress and provide feedback to the team.
- Advocate for language development services for students with disabilities and second language acquisition.

Without the Dual Language Teacher:

- The team may confuse language acquisition with disability.
- Language needs may be absent from the IEP.
- Bilingual instructional access may be overlooked.

With the Dual Language Teacher:

- Decisions are informed by language development data.
- Supports are culturally and linguistically responsive.
- Students receive both the language and disability services they are entitled to.

The Role of the ... Special Educator/Clinicians

Key Responsibilities

- Understand how disability and language acquisition interact
- Ensure disability-related needs are addressed without limiting language development
- Collaborate with bilingual/dual language educators to provide integrated supports
- Develop goals that are linguistically appropriate and accessible
- Monitor progress using both disability and language development data
- Protect access to both special education and bilingual/EL services
- Advocate for inclusive, asset-based practices that recognize bilingualism as a strength

The Role of the ... Leadership/Administrator

Key Responsibilities

- Ensure English Learners with disabilities have access to both bilingual/EL services and special education services
- Design master schedules that protect language development and specialized instruction
- Establish structures for collaboration between Dual Language, EL, and Special Education staff
- Ensure required team members, including Dual Language teachers and Bilingual Specialists, participate in IEP meetings
- Monitor implementation of IEP services and language development services
- Allocate staffing and resources to support inclusive and equitable practices
- Build staff capacity on multilingual learners with disabilities through ongoing professional learning
- Foster a school culture that views bilingualism as an asset and inclusion as a shared responsibility

Principals Influence/Control



Case Study: Sofia's Profile

Sofia is a **4th grader** in a **one-way Dual Language** program (50/50 language allocation).

 **IEP:** Specific Learning Disability (SLD) in reading.

 **English Learner:** Bridging Spanish, emerging academic English. Has been in the US for 3 years.

 Receives resource support 45 minutes daily.

 Strong oral language in Spanish.

Time	Service
8:00-9:00	Spanish Literacy
9:00-9:45	Resource
10:00-11:00	SS Content based ESL
1:00-2:00	Math



Strengths

- Thrives during oral discussions in Spanish.
- Participates actively during partner conversations.
- Math reasoning is stronger verbally than in writing.



Challenges

- Struggles to read/analyze independent texts.
- Reads below grade level in English.

Area assessed:

Component	Proficiency Level
Listening	3.4
Speaking	1.4
Reading	1.8
Writing	1.8
Overall Composite Score	1.8

Elbow Partner: Who's need is it?

Bilingual – Which concerns may be connected to second language acquisition?

Special Ed - Which concerns may relate to the disability?

Intersection - Which areas might involve BOTH?

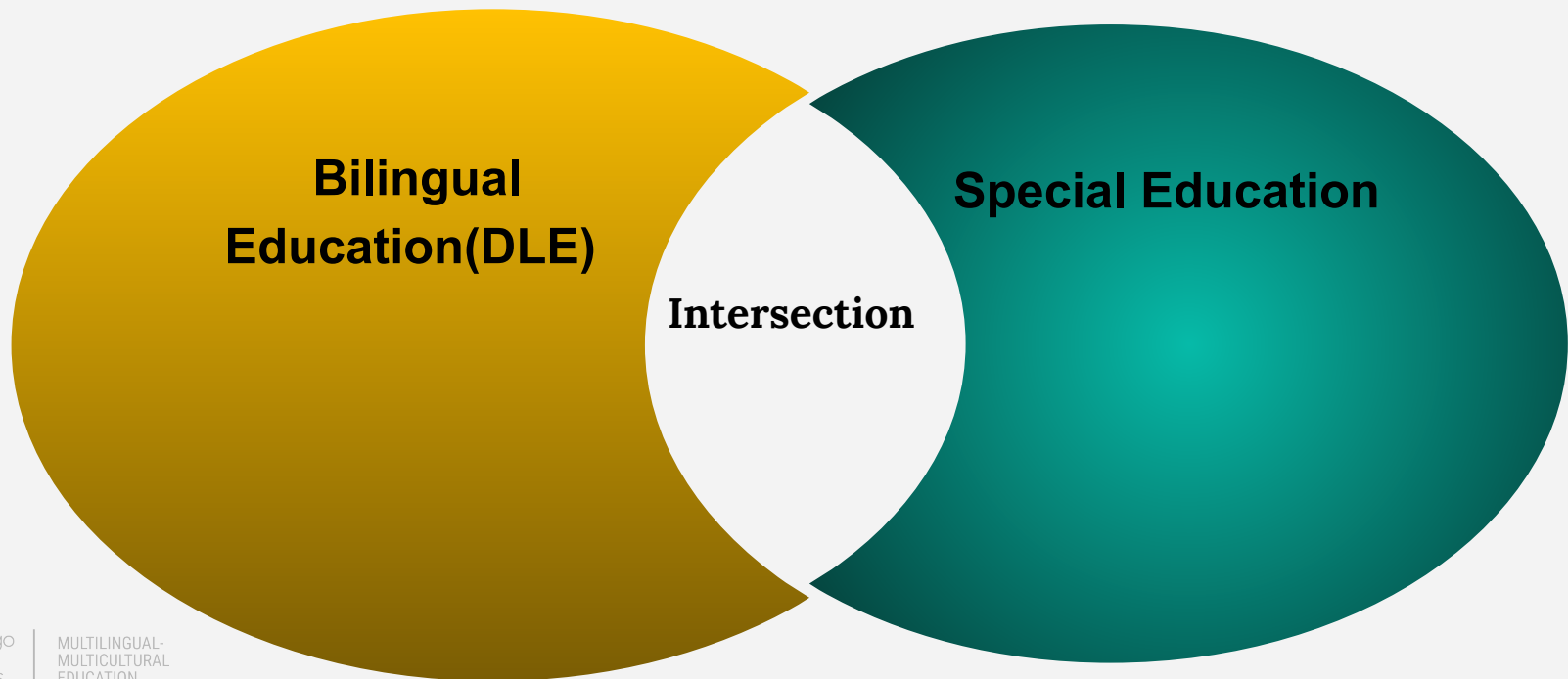


Figure 1. The bilingual special education interface (Baca et al., 2004)

Table Discussion: What would you advocate for?

The school is considering:

- **Increasing pull-out** reading intervention during Spanish literacy block
- **Adding Math minutes** for reading difficulties
- Reducing bilingual instructional time because *“special education is more important right now”*

Time	Service
8:00-9:00	Spanish Literacy
9:00-9:45	Resource
10:00-11:00	SS Content based ESL
1:00-2:00	Math

Assume a Role....

- What information should the Dual Language teacher contribute at the IEP table?
- What would the bilingual specialist likely advocate for?
- What would the Special Educator need to make an informed decision?
- What misconceptions might emerge during this meeting?



Collaboration Considerations

Diagnostic Matrix: How Does your Team Operate?

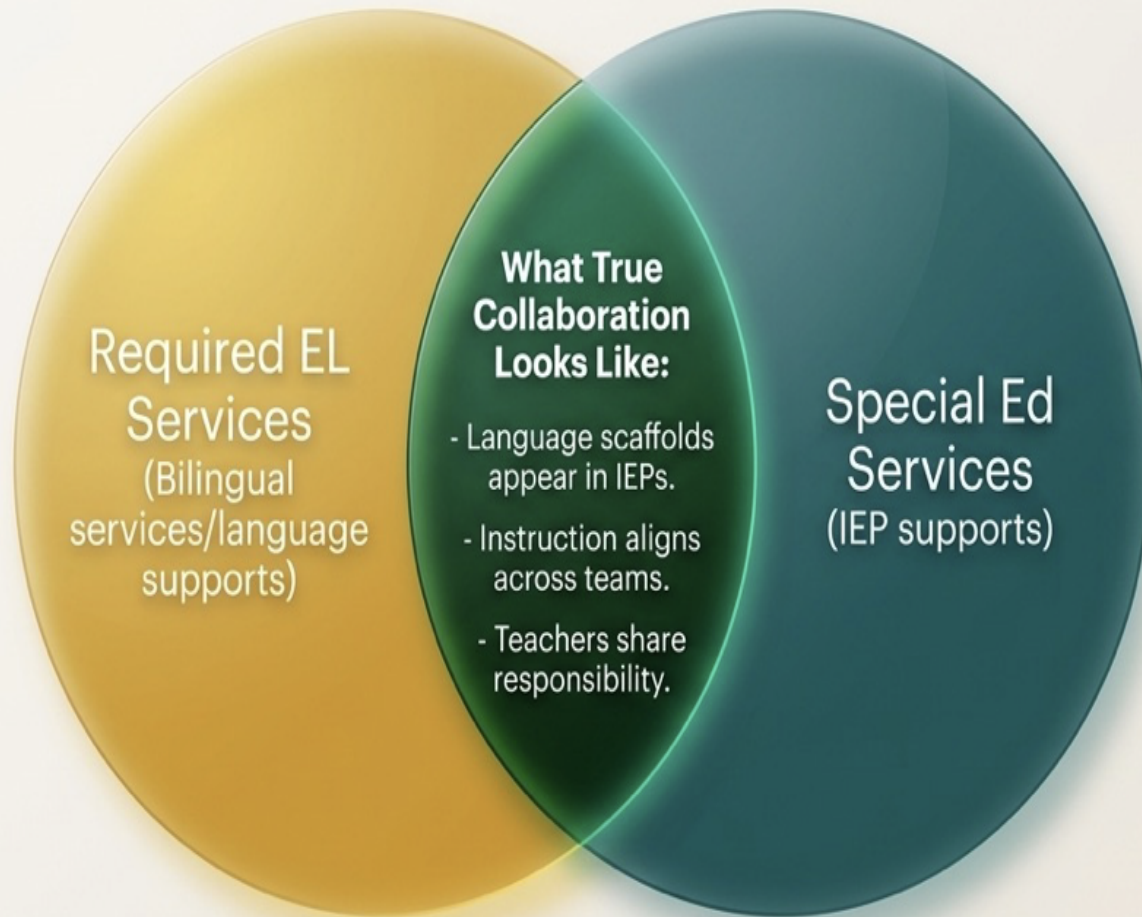
The Siloed Reality (Red Flags)

- ⚠ Bilingual staff missing from IEP meetings.
- ⚠ "Your kids" vs. "My kids" mentality.
- ⚠ EL time displaced by related services services.
- ⚠ EL accommodations missing from IEPs.

The Collaborative Ideal (Shared Responsibility)

- ✓ Protected co-planning time is built into master schedules.
- ✓ "Our students" shared ownership.
- ✓ Bilingual teachers actively report at the IEP table.
- ✓ Linguistic considerations are hardcoded into service delivery.

Redefining “Two Services”



Collaborative Teams

Establish Shared Goals: Collaborate around shared students on access, equity, and academic growth.



Joint Planning

Joint planning time for EL and SPED teachers.



Specialist Participation

Bilingual specialist participation in IEP meetings.



Data-Driven Insights

Use multiple sources: Language proficiency, IEP goals, and cultural background.



Progress Monitoring

Shared progress monitoring tools.



Reporting Collaboration

Collaboration in progress reporting.

Case in Point: Refining the IEP

Present Levels of Academic Achievement & Functional Performance (PLAAFP)

Initial PLAAFP

Student struggles with reading comprehension.

EL-Informed PLAAFP

Student demonstrates grade-level comprehension when afforded opportunities to discuss texts in Spanish, but experiences difficulty independently comprehending complex texts in English. Language proficiency data indicate developing academic language skills that impact reading performance.

IEP Goals

Weak Goal

Student will improve reading comprehension.

Strong Goal

Given grade-level texts, visual supports, and opportunities to process content in the home language, the student will identify key details and summarize text with 80% accuracy.

Embedding Language Scaffolds into IEPs

Siloed IEP Goal

Student will improve reading comprehension by answering WH questions with 80% accuracy.

(Ignores language acquisition level)

Both/And IEP Goal

Given a text at their instructional reading level **AND BILINGUAL GLOSSARY SUPPORT**, the student will answer WH questions with 80% accuracy.

IEP Goals must **explicitly reflect English Proficiency levels and linguistic supports. All bilingual program components** must be **provided**.

Every EL with an IEP Needs Three Things



Language

Development of bilingualism
and biliteracy



Disability Support

Specialized instruction and
accommodations



Belonging

Access to rigorous learning
with peers

Next Steps



Next Steps for DLE Teams

01

Audit Schedules

Look at a sample of your dually-identified students' schedules this week. Are BOTH services actively occurring without overlap?

02

Review IEP Alignment

Check upcoming IEPs. Are language scaffolds present? Is the bilingual team scheduled to participate?

03

Share Bright Spots

Identify where Special Ed and DLE collaboration is already working in your building and replicate it.



Tools to enhance collaboration

Review the following tools to explore ways to increase collaboration in your teams.



Resource Access

Click the link below to view the shared document containing all collaborative frameworks and communication protocols.

[Collaborative Tools & protocols](#)

Use the QR code to give us your feedback!



[Exit Slip](#)

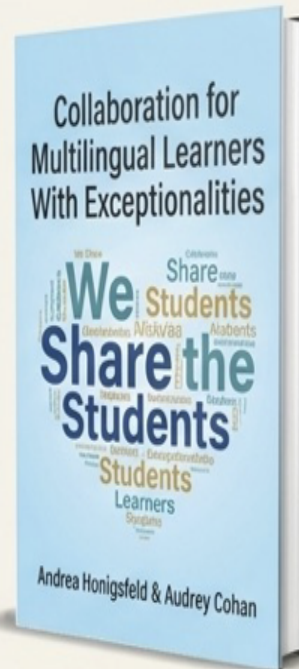
Resources for the Journey

Writing IEPs for English Language Learners

Illinois State Board of
Education (ISBE) Guidance



ELs with IEPs - ISBE



**Collaboration
for Multilingual
Learners with
Exceptionalities**

Andrea Honigsfeld
& Audrey Cohan

Connect with the district team at elswithIEPs@cps.edu