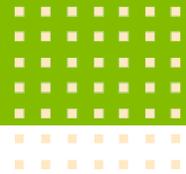




Viewpoints

Finding Ways To Better Serve Bilingual Students



Serving bilingual students effectively requires an educational approach that values and leverages their unique linguistic and cultural assets. One crucial strategy is to implement dual-language programs that promote bilingualism and biliteracy, not only supporting students' native language development but also enhancing their proficiency in English. These programs have been shown to improve academic achievement, cognitive flexibility, and cultural competence. By fostering an environment where both languages are equally valued and integrated into the curriculum, educators can create more inclusive and equitable learning experiences. Furthermore, providing professional development for teachers on culturally responsive pedagogy and bilingual education practices ensures that educators are equipped with the skills and knowledge to address the diverse needs of bilingual students.

Another essential aspect is involving families and communities in the educational process. Bilingual students often come from rich cultural backgrounds that can be harnessed to enrich the school community. Schools should actively engage with parents and community members, creating partnerships that support students' learning and celebrate their cultural heritage. This can include organizing cultural events, offering bilingual resources, and creating spaces for parents to share their knowledge and experiences. By fostering strong home-school connections and valuing the cultural capital that bilingual students bring, schools can create a more supportive and empowering educational environment. This holistic approach not only enhances academic outcomes for bilingual students but also fosters a sense of belonging and pride in their cultural identity.

Education leaders on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border say they are starting serious talks about how to support a big, growing, yet largely underserved population: English learners, as well as binational students who travel regularly between Mexico and California.

About 1.1 million students, or almost a fifth of California's K-12 public school enrollment, are English learners, meaning they have a language other than English spoken at home and do not yet have the



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English language skills to succeed in school. Four-fifths of them speak Spanish at home, according to the state education department.

The stakes are high for English learners, who lag behind their English-fluent peers in many aspects of school.

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