

# Research Evidence Against Dismantling the U.S. Education Department: How to Protect and Improve Programs for English Learners

## Talking Points for Advocates

On October 6, 2025, Education Law Center (ELC) hosted a webinar to discuss the U.S. Department of Education's role in supporting English learners and the potential harms of reduced federal oversight and funding. Expert panelists Montserrat Garibay, Former Assistant Deputy Secretary and Director of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition; Dr. Megan Hopkins, Professor, University of California San Diego; Dr. Alyn Turner, Senior Research Director, Research for Action; and Dr. Cara Jackson, Research Manager, The Center for Outcomes Based Contracting, shared key policy and research insights that can be used by advocates to demand the continued support of Title III English Language Acquisition funding and the host of other federal programs that benefit English learners. The webinar was moderated by ELC Research Director Dr. Danielle Farrie. View the recording [here](#). The following key takeaways from the webinar can be used to support advocacy efforts:

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*Protecting Title III isn't about preserving a niche program. It's about maintaining the conditions that make schools responsive and inclusive and effective for every learner. And when we build systems that work for English learners, we're building systems that work for everyone.*

*Dr. Megan Hopkins,  
University of California  
San Diego.*

### Policy Context

- The goal of Title III is to ensure that English learners and recently arrived immigrant students attain English proficiency and achieve academic content mastery at the same level expected of all students.** This is achieved through three core activities: language instruction education programs, professional development, and parent, family and community engagement.
- State leaders have long relied on the federal government to guide English learner education** through civil rights legislation, funding large-scale studies that states could not undertake on their own, and building and maintaining infrastructure that helps states translate evidence into practice. Without federal funding and oversight, every state is left to reinvent the wheel.
- Funding cuts mean that the infrastructure connecting research to practice is effectively being dismantled,** from eliminating comprehensive centers dedicated to multilingualism to cutting regional education laboratories.
- One of the most ambitious federally coordinated studies** in recent memory was canceled before it could be released. The erasure of this enormous investment in shared learning deprives leaders of the evidence they need to improve statewide policy and local practice.

## Research Findings

- **A review of the research evidence suggests that Title III may be struggling to meet its goals** due to implementation challenges and inadequate funding that has not kept pace with the growing English learner population, but *not* because of a lack of evidence for what works to support English learners and recent immigrants.
- **Developing and maintaining bilingual education programs is crucially important.** Although English learners take longer to reach English proficiency through bilingual approaches, in the long term, students in bilingual programs score higher on assessments than students experiencing English-only approaches, particularly in English Language Arts.
- **A clear challenge to implementing effective instructional practices is a well-prepared workforce** of teachers who have been trained on evidence-based approaches. The federal government plays a key role in assessing, documenting, and disseminating research on effective instruction and supporting professional development.

## Advocacy Messages

- **Investing in English learners is both a legal obligation and a smart economic strategy for our nation's future.** English learners are one of the fastest growing student populations, and more than 70% of them are U.S. citizens. These students will be paying into social security and Medicare and contributing to the workforce.
- **The loss of Title III funding doesn't just affect English learners; it affects the entire school community.** When schools lose their bilingual staff, translation services, and family liaisons, every families' ability to communicate and engage is diminished. Teacher quality declines across the board with the loss of professional learning, language development, and culturally responsive practices.
- **Title III funding cuts disproportionately impact low-income schools with higher proportions of English learners.** These schools are more likely to already be resource-strapped and struggling to provide services to meet a variety of student needs.
- **States can act now to reconfigure their school funding formulas, ensuring that additional funds are allocated explicitly for English learners.**
- **At the local level, school districts can leverage community partnerships** for professional development, afterschool programming, and other services that may typically be supported with federal funds.