Multilingual Learners with Disabilities in Tucson Unified School District:

A Path Toward Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining and Universally Designed Policies & Practices

Adai A. Tefera

Vanessa Macamo

Taucia González

University of Arizona

Alicia Monzalvo Curiel

Universidad de Sonora (Unison)

David I. Hernández-Saca

University of Northern Iowa

Multilingual Learners with Disabilities in TUSD:
A Path Toward Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining and Universally Designed Policies & Practices

Multilingual Learners[1] (MLs), particularly those with disabilities, can face challenges in language acquisition and accessing effective educational services in the U.S. K-12 system (Cioè-Peña, 2020; Kangas, 2018). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021), the number of multilingual learners (MLLs) with disabilities has increased over the past decade, from 2011 to 2021. According to the Arizona Department of Education (2023), there are approximately five million MLs enrolled in public schools, of which 14% are identified with disabilities. The Arizona Department of Education reported that 14% of the approximately five million MLs enrolled in Arizona public schools are identified as having disabilities (Arizona Department of Education, 2023). Given that MLs and students with disabilities represent two groups that not only have very specific educational needs but also overlap, the intersection of language learning needs and disability services poses a significant area of study and attention.

A key ongoing challenge exists in current educational laws and policies where a contradiction exists as schools continue to establish policies that favor only a specific set of services, such as special education *or* language services (Kangas, 2018). Despite research demonstrating the importance of early and accurate special education identification practices, inappropriate policies and practices continue to impact MLs. A range of issues persist, such as the need to assess multilingual children with disabilities non verbally or in their most proficient language to minimize bias and ensure accurate outcomes (Park, 2020; Harry & Klingner, 2022).Challenges arise as most assessments are conducted in the school's dominant language, and many evaluators are monolingual, limiting their ability to interpret results accurately (Novogrodsky & Meir, 2022). Consequently, MLs may be misclassified into special education for disabilities due to subjective evaluations by educators rather than proper assessments (Harry & Klingner, 2022; Kangas, 2018). On the other hand, there are cases where MLLs may have disabilities, but due to insufficient understanding of language learning processes, evaluation processes are delayed and they do not get access to special education services (Kangas, 2018; Harry & Klingner, 2022; Novogrodsky & Meir, 2022).

Research reveals educators may be working under de facto policies about the amount of English instruction a multilingual learner needs before proceeding with a referral for special education. For example, Park (2020), found that educators who worked with young MLs often used a "two years of instruction" rule to delay the referral process due to a "wait to be sure" stance that violated federal policy. Whether waiting due to uncertainty or taking a "sooner the better" stance, educators conceptualized both the labels of "multilingual learner" and "disability" using a deficit lens (Park, 2020; Valencia, 2012).

Notably, MLs can also be misidentified with disabilities (Cioè-Peña, 2020; Harry & Klingner, 2022; Cuba & Tefera, 2024). Research shows that MLs are often either over-identified for special education due to misinterpretation of their language acquisition process or under-identified, depriving them of critical support (Kozleski, 2005; Park, 2020; Umansky et al., 2020).

[1] This group of students is often referred to as English language learners within schools. We refer to them as multilingual learners to highlight their linguistic strengths in developing multiple languages simultaneously.

These issues are exacerbated by bifurcated educational service structures, which segregate language learning and special education services, often isolating students into one system or the other without adequately considering their intersecting needs (Klingner & Harry, 2006; Sullivan, 2011; Kangas, 2018).

Educational systems show inconsistent application of laws supporting MLLs with disabilities. A significant disparity exists between the acquisition of the English language and services for students with disabilities, compounded by uncertainty regarding the appropriate timing for referring a child for evaluation to avoid inappropriate identification (Park, 2020; Harry & Klingner, 2022). How can schools navigate these challenges and meet the educational needs of MLs with disabilities?

In the sections that follow we address this important question in the context of Tucson Unified School District. First, we provide an overview of our project, briefly describe our approach, and end with our findings and recommendations.

A Brief Overview of the Project

We began this project in the fall of 2020 through 2023, with a focus on addressing policies and practices related to MLs with disabilities in TUSD. Importantly, this was also the time of the COVID-19 pandemic which shaped many aspects of our study, most notably the challenges we faced in the recruitment of educators and leaders to participate in the project. To begin the recruitment process, we worked collaboratively with the director of special education to determine which schools had the greatest number of multilingual learners with disabilities and those leaders would be most open to and interested in participating in the project. After reaching out to three schools, two agreed to participate. In total, across the three schools, we interviewed 12 educators and leaders within the district. In the spring of 2023, we began analyzing the interview data. Once all interviews were analyzed, we developed our findings and recommendations.

A Disability Studies Intersectional Approach

This project is grounded in the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1995). Intersectionality can be defined as "a method and a disposition, a heuristic and analytical tool" (Runyan, 2018, p. 10) that theorizes intersectional identities along axes of race, gender, and other identity markers that people live and can be discriminated against along personal, interpersonal, structural and political ways in society (Crenshaw, 1995). Educational equity scholars such as Ladson-Billings and William Tate IV, among others, have contributed to the application of intersectionality in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Given the complex entanglements of ethnicity, race, language, and dis/ability in education (Garcia et al., 2013; Iqtadar et al., 2020), it is crucial to apply both conceptual and practical frameworks of intersectionality in the context of multilingual learners, whether they have disabilities or not (Schissel & Kangas, 2018). The stories of students and families of Color in education (Connor, 2008), particularly those in Arizona and our broader study, highlight the need

for educators and school leaders to move beyond singular identity models in school policies and practices such as identification and classification processes (Cioè-Peña, 2021).

This shift requires explicit attention to these intersections in school policies and practices, enabling a culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining (See Paris, 2012; Waitoller & Thorius, 2022) environment for multilingual learners with and without disabilities (Ortiz, Fránquiz, & Lara, 2020; Padia, Cioè-Peña & Phuong, 2024). By implementing intersectionally-conscious policies and practices, we can disrupt misidentification practices and address the systemic issues that affect multilingual learners with and without disabilities in the identification processes. This approach not only meets diverse needs but also helps to combat discriminatory practices within educational systems.

Furthermore, we use the integration of culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining practices with the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which is an educational framework aimed at optimizing teaching through multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement to effectively engage the diverse needs of each learner and their unique intersectionalities (Artiles et al., 2020; Waitoller & Thorius, 2022). Such integration is important to engage an interdisciplinary and intersectional approach to multilingual learners with and without disabilities, as it allows us to be responsive to both language and dis/Ability, as well as other identity markers that these students embody and identify with, thereby fostering an inclusive learning environment that honors their unique cultural backgrounds and experiences.

What We Found

Our findings included three broad themes. The first related to opportunities to improve the special education identification process for MLs. We also found that there are opportunities to integrate special education and English language support services for MLs with disabilities through more inclusive and intersectional approaches. Finally, we found there is an opportunity to clarify the purpose and use of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) for MLs with disabilities by providing clear guidance and support to educators working with MLs with and without disabilities. These findings are outlined in the section.

Finding #1: Provide Timely Identification and Services for MLs with Disabilities

Evidence continues to demonstrate that MLs are often under-identified to receive special education services in their early years of schooling – e.g., elementary school – and over-identified later – e.g., in high school. Despite this, local and federal policies (e.g., IDEA) do not require tracking of identification of multilingual learners in the same ways they are required to report identification rates by race, for example. This is important given that some MLs in elementary school may not be receiving essential early services while at the same time they may be inappropriately identified in secondary schools which can lead to social-emotional and academic challenges.

Interviews with school leaders and educators revealed similar patterns within TUSD. In many cases there was a reluctance to begin the identification process for special education for MLs too early. This was true even when there was a recognition that earlier identification and offerings of services has the potential to support students. One school leader explained:

> *There's really never been a case where there's a jump to classify too soon, that I found... [In] our school, it's been more of the opposite of the child is a late developer...but we had to wait just because they were an ELL. [We] had to wait till third grade to get this level of support and accommodation and services when they could have had it earlier.*

Here the leader discussed the potential harms of identifying a multilingual learner with a disability too late given a delay in support and services. Similarly, a teacher discussed:

> *If I see something's not happening with the kids or they're not clicking it's like I want to...get it recorded [to] decide if there might be a potential of disability...Now there's been sort of a rule that if they're an English language learner that has to be addressed first, and so they wouldn't even really want to put them into the full MTSS [multi-tiered systems of support]...So that's been interesting.*

Similarly a school leader noted:

> *If a student is an English language learner, we are not to be looking at them for exceptional education for a period of time. They need to have at least a few years of English language instruction before we even begin to say there's a learning disability, or there's something else going on.*

Across the interviews that we conducted, waiting to begin assessing MLs for special education services was a common theme. This finding demonstrates the need to carefully consider how language acquisition and disability services are part of the special education eligibility process in both primary and secondary schools. This is critical to ensuring MLs receive equitable language acquisition *and* disability services. It is no surprise that this is a challenge many districts face given the ambiguity of federal guidelines and policies are often interpreted by districts, who then provide instructional directives to school districts that may be difficult to implement. This lack of policy guidance often contributes to fragmented and inconsistent practices in schools, which can undermine educators' good intentions to not over-identify multilingual learners with disabilities.

Recommendations

There is a need for expansive thinking in terms of selection of assessment tools and procedures for MLs with disabilities at every stage. This includes prereferral processes when students are demonstrating an area of need that may require additional supports. During the pre-referral or intervention stage, for example, school professionals can consider collecting multiple forms of student data, collaborating with language acquisition experts and comparing student data to true peer data instead of data from English-dominant speaking students. True peers are other MLs who have similar educational backgrounds, language proficiencies, and experiences with

im/migration (Brown & Doolittle, 2008). If the student is making the same level of progress as their true peers, then language programming might be in question. If not, the team could consider a referral. Providing adequate supports is a multilayered issue that requires awareness that each multilingual learner has complexities, possessing a variety of assets, skills, and needs that education stakeholders need to consider in assessing whether a multilingual learner should be referred or identified with a disability (Cuba & Tefera, 2024).

Finding #2: A bifurcation of services for either special education or language services (including segregated nature of language and special education)

Our interviews revealed that MLLs with disabilities often receive special education or language services, so it is either one or the other. This division results in a lack of collaboration and communication between educators, resulting in fragmented support for students in need of both services. This finding highlights the bifurcation of services, where MLLs with disabilities are often placed into rigid language support structures (e.g., Structured English Immersion [SEI] classrooms or pullout English Language Development [ELD]) that may not consider their full educational needs or identities of students with disabilities.

Although the schools where we conducted interviews did not have a large population of MLLs with disabilities, we found the concentration of separate classrooms for MLLs with disabilities—particularly in the early grades—was a limitation. To this point, one school leader shared that mandatory grouping can appear to be a form of student segregation and can limit flexibility in classroom placement. Equally important, the leader explained that scheduling requirements for English Language Development (ELD) services often cause MLLs with disabilities to miss optional courses or other instructional periods, raising concerns about equity. He shared:

> *[L]anguage acquisition itself is a huge challenge because we're you know another form of [name of program excluded] where we would be able to place our students in classrooms that we felt they could just flourish in but we have these instructional models where we're required to put them and concentrate them um I like to use the word segregate but they have to stay in the same pack,"*

In this example, the school leader used the term "segregate" to show his discomfort with the use of separate classrooms for MLLs with disabilities. The school leader went on to describe how mandated clustering in SEI classrooms limited the flexibility typically valued in schools.

The leader reinforced this point and expressed concern about how adherence to state policies, such as mandated SEI classroom clustering, can restrict flexibility and unintentionally limit educational access for MLLs with disabilities. The leader explained:

> *They have to stay in the same pack, which I understand because it's easier for scheduling, it's easier for the teacher to make sure they're focusing on sheltering strategies and stuff but um it it's kind of a difficult challenge because we have to schedule, like their middle school days, so that they could end up missing part of their other like elective activities*

> *because they haven't gotten enough proficiency and they have to do the required ELD minutes and meet with our language acquisition resource teacher.*

While aligned with state requirements, the structure of separate (or segregated) language services can lead to equity concerns, particularly when ELD support takes priority over elective or integrative learning opportunities. For this school leader, mandated clustering created more barriers than solutions. While a more equitable and flexible approach would involve integrating language acquisition services into general education classrooms, what is happening now is clustering students in isolated SEI settings.

The interview highlighted the need for TUSD to review policies that isolate MLLs in classrooms and rely on pullout ELD models, which disrupt access to core instruction and enrichment opportunities, underscoring the critical necessity for change as pointed out by a TUSD district leader:

> *[B]because students who were in the pullout programs for larger blocks of time, so then they're missing out on some of the socialization with their peers. Oftentimes they're primarily getting LA [language arts] and math instruction so then they also miss out on some electives or like science and social studies.*

These data demonstrate that there are structural barriers to TUSD's approach to ELD for multilingual students that negatively impact their educational performance in the general education system. There are systemic barriers rooted in the way schools prioritize language acquisition over addressing potential disabilities. As a school teacher noted: *"We've got a good team, we've got a good support team for exceptional children and they're ready to help. A lot of times it's just the paperwork of trying to figure that out, and how we can identify and make sure that we're supporting them."*

Our interviews and analysis revealed that organizational structures within schools can have potentially negative consequences for academic learning. As a result, the incorporation of inclusive approaches that prioritize the student and their needs as a whole was not apparent. A clear example of this is the "rule" that prioritizes ELL identification first, so that they can be addressed first. This can unintentionally delay access to MTSS and formal assessment, reinforcing a wait-and-see model that leads to failure for multilingual students. For example, one teacher explained: *"It can take long [assessment process] I think sometimes too long…But we still have to go through that long process so it's very disgruntling for a lot of families and teachers that they're not getting help sooner…"* Similarly, another school teacher noted the knowledge families have about their child. The teacher explained:

> *I'd say the mom already knew it was more about the disability than the language but she was put in that language development class too, and so she actually stayed in my class, because the mom said, 'You know what I don't her to leave the class…I'm sure it's not a language issue…because we only speak English in the class and in the home…I can't ask [for a student] to be tested, we have to go through all these steps, but if the parents says*

> *let's check for exceptional ed, then they will. Otherwise it could be a two to three years process right before they get the exceptional ed services.*

Our findings reveal a systemic adherence to top-down policy implementation that limits flexibility in supporting MLLs with disabilities. Not only was it clear from the data we gathered that there is a problematic binary in the system—it's either "just language" or "a disability"—but it's also a very limited space to explore how language development, cultural differences, and neurodiversity intersect. MLLs with disabilities face several challenges due to the applied practices that reinforce the one-size-fits-all approach, which often does not suit these students' cultural and academic needs. Even if there is an effort to raise awareness among educators about these limitations, the lack of institutional support and autonomy makes it difficult to adopt more inclusive and nuanced strategies. There is clearly a tension between the educator's willingness to take action (" *I want to get them into that, so they will be actually be recorded*") and the structural limitations imposed on them by the system. These findings highlight the need for policy revisions that empower schools to respond more effectively to the diverse needs of their multilingual students, particularly with disabilities.

Recommendations

To better support MLLs with disabilities across all schools, it is important to consider staying away from separating MLLs into isolated SEI classrooms and rely predominantly on pullout ELD models, which often disrupt access to core instruction and enrichment opportunities. Instead, the district could consider promoting inclusive, flexible service delivery models—such as co-teaching and integrated language support—that allow MLLs to remain in general education settings while receiving targeted support. Focusing on creating an integrated service that combines special education and language services, ensuring that MLLs with disabilities receive thorough support, is important. It goes beyond simply improving communication between the district and schools; it is vital for all parties involved to have a cohesive understanding of the laws and policies that pertain to multilingual learners with disabilities.

It is also crucial to dedicate resources towards strengthening the capabilities of districts, schools, and educators to understand the existing policies more effectively and to provide improved support for multilingual learners with disabilities following their identification. This will facilitate the preparation of qualified special education and English language teachers to effectively support multilingual learners with disabilities. Furthermore, it is crucial to provide these educators with the necessary resources and collaborative spaces to make informed educational decisions for these learners (Kangas, 2018; Stutzman & Lowenhaupt, 2022). Training for all stakeholders involved in this process is vital to bolster teachers' asset-driven, research-informed comprehension of multilingual learners. Moreover, school-level support for interdisciplinary teams and opportunities for educators to collaboratively assess data and evidence related to multilingual learners and those with disabilities is imperative.

Finding #3: A Need to Clarify the Purpose and Use of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for MLs to Close the Policy-to-Practice Disconnect

Overall, we found that TUSD has an evidence-based Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework. The system has been in place for close to a decade and has undergone various iterations. Currently, the plan, as understood by school leaders and teachers included in this study, is based on three tiers of service delivery. Within this framework, leaders and teachers draw on tools such as the MTSS handbook, an MTSS roster, a system-initiated timeline, and progress monitoring tools (e.g., DIBELS, i-Ready). Though classroom teachers are central figures in initiating MTSS processes through the use of progress monitoring, there is a team approach embedded in the MTSS process. The team seems to include an MTSS facilitator along with staff teams (i.e., lead teacher/reading specialist) selected at the individual school sites. The MTSS facilitator acts as a liaison between the school and the district in order to ensure compliance with district expectations. One interesting note was that though the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act authorized the use of tiered intervention systems as a replacement to the discrepancy model of testing, the district seems to use both. For example, one teacher shared: *"Then there's the psychologist that comes in and they do testing, and then to see if they qualify. I know that if somebody tests low-low and there is not a discrepancy, that they don't qualify for services"*.

There were differences between how school leaders and educators describe the MTSS system in terms of its process, purpose, and how it works for multilingual learners. These differences may result from meaning lost as information trickles down from administration to the classroom. For instance, school leaders described a robust framework that includes school personnel who are well-versed in understanding language development and awareness from the district level and the school psychologist. It does seem that the district is well aware of the danger of conflating language differences for disabilities and consequently errs on the side of waiting. One school leader described, *"It would be something like in second grade they may start to say well, [...] now it's evident in might be more than just language development and acquisition that's going through with the children may actually have learning disability"*. There were differences in how teachers understood the MTSS system, including misunderstandings of how MTSS functions as a system of tiered intervention (as opposed to a system to get a student evaluated), understanding how to deliver tiered interventions that will better support individual learners, and how long this process should take.

Although MTSS is a system of support for all students, teachers seemed to interpret the system as an evaluation framework rather than a system to support students. One teacher described tier one as something students are put on, perhaps referring to the MTSS roster, *"so I have to refer them and they get on what they call the first tier," and another also described it similarly, "We put her on MTSS already."* The teacher's comment also demonstrates misunderstandings of what happens in tier one, *"We have supports we're already trying. We're going to keep trying then after a period of time and not seeing progress and showing evidence through testing."* This seems to suggest that tier one only applies to some students rather than tier one being the instruction they deliver to the entire class. Tier two is described as different from tier one in that there may be outside support and the teacher has to identify practices they will use with the student, *"Oh okay we're now at the second tier it's still in the classroom maybe we'll get some*

outside support but probably not. But then I have to sort of give like well, these are the specific things we're going to try." There seems to be limitations on teachers' understanding of what they can actually do differently in their tier two instruction as opposed to what they are already doing, and that they are in need of more explicit support for delivering tier two interventions. One teacher explained, *"there's no outside anything when you're saying, 'I'm trying everything I already know right now.' We're going to go through another tier. And you keep trying everything you know, or they might give a little bit of advice, 'Well, have you tried this and tried this?' 'Yes'".* This frustration seems to be rooted in teachers' need for support or development in how to deliver tier two interventions and how they differ from tier one. As one teacher shared, *"Wait we need help with this child nothing changes"*. Outside supports seem to accompany tier three, as described by another teacher, *"And that's that the third level is when there's finally some other support than what is already going on in the classroom".*

Aside from misunderstandings about tiered interventions, there seemed to be consensus amongst teachers that the evaluation process for multilingual students can take years. A teacher described this:

> *[I]t can take long... I think sometimes too long. It's mostly for kids that just as being in the education field, [...] to me, it's common sense stuff that we are not allowed to put in our reports because it's more of an objective thing, but sometimes they're like 'okay no we see that, but we still have to go through that long process.' So It's very disgruntling for a lot of families and teachers that they're not getting helped sooner, because we have to wait for that whole process to happen."*

The long waits would not be concerning if students were receiving tiered supports but based on teachers' responses there is insufficient understanding and systems in place to deliver those supports for multilingual learners. This essentially means that in the years leading up to evaluation, multilingual learners with undiagnosed disabilities might be missing out on essential intervention supports.

Recommendations

Based on the findings related to tiered intervention systems, we have two key recommendations to increase equity for multilingual learners with disabilities through Universal Design for Learning and culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining practices.

First, teachers expressed frustration with the amount of time it took for students, namely MLs to receive a disability label. Interestingly, tiered intervention systems are supposed to be a means to provide everyone with immediate interventions rather than a mechanism for disability labeling. Teachers seemed to understand tiered intervention systems as a mechanism for getting students disability labels and special education supports rather than a system of support for all students. Consequently, we recommend additional training for teachers to understand the purpose of tiered intervention systems as a system for all children to receive the academic support needed immediately. In addition, we recommend that tiered intervention systems are both culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining and through Universal Design for Learning (UDL), in

particular, the UDL guidelines that came out in 2024 the center on identity, culture, belonging, and joy (See https://udlguidelines.cast.org/more/about-guidelines-3-0/):

Multiple Means of Engagement

- Centering, affirming, and sustaining learners' interests and identities
- Emphasizing the role of belonging in teaching and learning
- Promoting the role of joy and play for learners and educators alike
- Cultivating empathy and repairing harm with restorative practices

Multiple Means of Representation

- Authentically representing a diversity of identities, perspectives, and narratives
- Considering perceptions of people, cultures, and languages
- Valuing multiple ways of knowing and making meaning

Multiple Means of Action and Expression

- Honoring and valuing a wide variety of forms of communication
- Centering and valuing forms of expression that have been historically silenced or ignored by addressing biases
- Challenging exclusionary practices to build more accessible, inclusive spaces and systems (para. 13-15).

This recommendation is contingent on the second recommendation.

Our second recommendation is for culturally and linguistically responsive, sustaining and UDL-informed tiered intervention systems to be understood and utilized as intended, teachers will need additional support in implementing tier-two interventions. They currently express vague understandings of what they do differently in tier two instruction and seem to focus more on how they describe what they are already doing rather than changing what they are doing. Training can include and be supported by tier-two co-teaching opportunities so that teachers have opportunities to implement culturally responsive, sustaining and UDL-informed interventions and reflect with a critical friend.

To further enhance the implementation of tiered intervention systems that are culturally and linguistically responsive, sustaining, and informed by Universal Design for Learning (UDL), it is crucial to establish a comprehensive support framework for teachers. This framework should focus on creating collaborative environments where educators can engage in meaningful professional development that is directly tied to their classroom practices. We recommend the establishment of mentorship programs that pair experienced teachers proficient in UDL and culturally and linguistically responsive practices with those who are less familiar with these approaches. This mentorship can facilitate hands-on workshops and co-planning sessions, allowing teachers to observe effective strategies in action and adapt them to their unique classroom contexts. Furthermore, ongoing professional learning communities (PLCs) should be established to foster continuous dialogue about best practices in tier-two interventions, emphasizing the importance of reflection and peer feedback. By embedding opportunities for collaborative planning and reflection into the school culture, teachers can develop a deeper understanding of how to implement tier-two interventions that truly meet the diverse needs of multilingual learners with and without dis/Abilities. This approach not only builds teachers'

confidence in their instructional practices but also cultivates a shared commitment to equity and inclusivity within the school community, ultimately enhancing the educational experience for each student.

Conclusion

We hope that the themes from the voices of the school leaders' beliefs and the Universal Design for Learning and culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining recommendations from this study will offer valuable insights to practitioners within and across the TUSD, positively influencing the identification processes, policies, and practices related to MLs with disabilities. This is particularly important in addressing the issues of over-identification for special education due to misinterpretation of their language acquisition process, as well as under-identification that deprives them of essential support for academic, social, and emotional development for their self-determination that is culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining and universally designed. With these findings and recommendations, it is ever more important to go beyond the technical (e.g., the laws and policies) dimensions of teaching and learning, but from the start, create and co-create universal design and asset-based pedagogies such as culturally and linguistically responsive and universal design in education that accounts for the intersections of disability and language.

References

Arizona Department of Education: Arizona Department of Education. (2023). *English Language Learners Annual Report*. Retrieved from https://www.azed.gov

Artiles, A. J. (2013). Untangling the racialization of disabilities: An intersectionality critique across disability models1. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race, 10*(2), 329-347.

Artiles, A. J., Rose, D., González, T., & Bal, A. (2020). Culture and Biology in Learning Disabilities Research: Legacies and Possible Futures 1. In Handbook of the cultural foundations of learning (pp. 160-177). Routledge.

Cioè-Peña, M. (2020). Bilingualism for students with disabilities, deficit or advantage?: Perspectives of latinx mothers. *Bilingual Research Journal*, *43*(3), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2020.1799884

Crenshaw, K. (1995). Mapping the margins. *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement, 3*(15), 357-383.

Cuba, M. J., & Tefera, A. A. (2024). Contextualizing multilingual learner disproportionality in special education: A Mixed-Methods approach. *Teachers College Record*. https://doi.org/10.1177/01614681241233877

De Jong, E. J. (2018). Educating English learners: Language diversity in the classroom. Caslon Publishing.

Garcia, S. B., & Ortiz, A. A. (2013). Intersectionality as a framework for transformative research in special education. *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners, 13*(2), 32-47.

Gajardo K., Cáceres-Iglesias J., Santamaría-Cárdaba N., Meza-Cortés A.F. (2023). Current Research on Inclusive Education in Mexico. Integration of Education. 27(4):669–680. https://doi.org/10.15507/1991-9468.113.027.202304.669-680

Gonzalez, T., Tefera, A., & Artiles, A. (2014). The intersections of language differences and learning disabilities: Narratives in action. In *The Routledge handbook of educational linguistics* (pp. 145-157). Routledge.

Kangas, S. E. N. (2018). Breaking one law to uphold another: How schools provide services to English learners with disabilities. *TESOL Quarterly*, *52*(4), 877–910. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.431

Migration Policy Institute. (2013, November 25). *English Learners in K-12 Education by State*. Migrationpolicy.org. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/english-learners-k-12-education-state

Iqtadar, S., Hernanández-Saca, D. I., & Ellison, S. (2020). " If It Wasn't My Race, It Was Other Things Like Being a Woman, or My Disability": A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research. *Disability Studies Quarterly, 40*(2).

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47-68.

National Center for Education Statistics (2021). English learners in public schools. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp

National Center for Education Statistics. (2024). *English learners in public schools*. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf.

Padia, L., Cioè-Peña, M., & Phuong, J. (2024). Mending the Intersectional Gap: Supporting emergent multilinguals labeled as disabled through translanguaging and universal design for learning. Theory Into Practice, (just-accepted).

Park, S. (2020). Demystifying Disproportionality: Exploring Educator Beliefs about Special Education Referrals for English Learners. *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, *122*(5), 1–40. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146812012200510

Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher, 41*(3), 93-97.

Ortiz, A. A., Fránquiz, M. E., & Lara, G. P. (2020). Applying an intersectionality lens to education policy and practice for emergent bilinguals. *Bilingual Research Journal, 43*(4), 357-361.

Rama Novogrodsky, & Meir, N. (2022). Multilingual Children with Special Needs in Early Education. *Springer EBooks*, 669–696. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-91662-6_18

Runyan, A. S. (2018). What is intersectionality and why is it important?. *Academe, 104*(6), 10-14.

Schissel, J. L., & Kangas, S. E. (2018). Reclassification of emergent bilinguals with disabilities: The intersectionality of improbabilities. *Language policy, 17*(4), 567-589.

Sullivan, A. L. (2011). Disproportionality in special education identification and placement of English language learners. Exceptional Children, 77(3), 317–334.

Valencia, R. R. (2012). *The evolution of deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice.* Routledge.

Umansky, I. M., Thompson, K. D., & Díaz, G. R. (2020). English learners: Shifting to a strengths-based paradigm. Educational Researcher, 49(4), 271-280.

Waitoller, F. R., & Thorius, K. K. (Eds.). (2022). *Sustaining disabled youth: Centering disability in asset pedagogies.* Teachers College Press.