

Evaluation of NMPED Actions Regarding English Learners in Bilingual Multicultural Education
Programs

Prepared by: Dr. Susana Ibarra Johnson

Date: November 10, 2025

Introduction

This expanded evaluation examines the New Mexico Public Education Department’s (NMPED) Martinez/Yazzie Final Action Plan in relation to English Learners (ELs) participating in Bilingual Multicultural Education Programs (BMEPs). A central focus is how NMPED’s actions align with the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act (BMEA) and whether the community’s concerns particularly those regarding bilingualism, biliteracy, and educator preparation have been integrated. Additionally, this evaluation highlights recruitment of State Seal of Bilingualism–Biliteracy (SSBB) students as future bilingual educators and the integration of Title VII principles into IHE teacher preparation pathways.

Table 1. Community Input, NMPED Actions, and Evaluation of Compliance with BMEA Requirements

Community Member Input	NMPED Actions	Evaluation & Response
Curriculum must reflect bilingual students and reject one-size-fits-all, English-only approaches.	Continues structured literacy/Science of Reading implementation; EPPs required to embed structured literacy; course audits enforce compliance.	Non-compliant. Structured literacy frameworks center English-only pedagogy; violates BMEA intention.
Protect bilingual education from English-only SoR mandates.	Mandates EPP alignment to SoR; requires course numbering and compliance audits.	Non-compliant. English-only methods undermine bilingual education principles and goals.
Need for bilingual and biliteracy materials; 45% of BMEP teachers lack resources.	Expands bilingual resource library; supports oral language for unwritten languages.	Partially compliant. Positive direction but lacks timeline, budget, and bilingual alignment.
Screen ELs in home languages & avoid misidentification; follow BMEAC advisements.	Literacy Center provides dyslexia interventions; no bilingual screening safeguards.	Non-compliant. Fails to incorporate bilingual screening recommendations; risks over-identification.
Build bilingual educator workforce; align preservice	Incentives for bilingual teachers; licensure requires	Partially compliant. Incentives are promising but licensure alignment

training to biliteracy pedagogy.	structured literacy competencies.	undermines bilingual preparation.
Develop K–12 bilingual programs; expand Seal of Biliteracy pathways.	Expansion of Seal of Bilingualism–Biliteracy; technical assistance to districts/charters.	Compliant but not systemic. No structured pathway development across grade levels.
Collaboration with tribes and bilingual experts is essential.	Tribal consultation, LANL engagement, stakeholder meetings.	Partially compliant. General consultation occurred but bilingual-specific recommendations not integrated.
English learners must not be assessed using English-only frameworks.	Plans to develop culturally relevant MSSA items, still English-only assessments.	Non-compliant. BMEA requires bilingual assessment; MSSA remains monolingual.
Licensure must reflect bilingual competencies, not only national best practice standards tied to English-only models.	PED amends licensure requirements to include national best practice standards.	Non-compliant. Licensure changes constrain bilingual educator preparation; violate bilingual education principles and need to draw from National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) Standards for Bilingual Education which encompass best practices for bilingual educators in five programs models (Heritage, Dual Language, Maintenance, Enrichment, and Transitional)

Narrative Analysis and Interpretation

1. The State Seal of Bilingualism–Biliteracy as a Teacher Recruitment Strategy

One of the most promising elements in the Martinez/Yazzie Final Action Plan is the recognition that the Seal of Bilingualism–Biliteracy (SSBB) has potential to strengthen bilingual educator pipelines. Over 1,600 New Mexico graduates earned the SSBB in 2025 a substantial population

of bilingual, biliterate young adults who represent the next generation of potential bilingual educators and university level professors. However, the plan does not articulate a structured pipeline/pathway strategy to convert these graduates into future bilingual teachers/professors.

Community members expressed a strong desire for the state to create recruitment mechanisms that identify SSBB recipients early, mentor them, and connect them with higher education pathways into bilingual and TESOL teacher preparation programs. This would align directly with the BMEA's purpose to sustain bilingualism, build biliteracy, and ensure that bilingual programs are staffed with certified professionals proficient in languages used in instruction.

My evaluation notes that SSBB recipients should be identified, recruited, guided, and financially supported into bilingual teacher preparation pathways, but the current plan lacks explicit actions, funding structures, and IHE partnerships to operationalize this vision.

Gaps Identified

- No dedicated funding for bilingual educator scholarships targeted at SSBB students.
- No recruitment alignment with IHE bilingual/TESOL programs.
- No mentorship structures pairing SSBB recipients with practicing bilingual teachers.
- No coordinated statewide pipeline for bilingual teacher preparation.

Recommendation

Propose that NMPED:

- Create a statewide bilingual educator fellowship program for SSBB students entering IHE teacher preparation programs.
- Partner with IHEs to develop clear bilingual teacher pathways, including accelerated BA-to-MA routes for bilingual and TESOL certification.
- Leverage structured mentorship pipelines, pairing SSBB students with bilingual educators, BMEP-endorsed teachers, tribal language instructors, and university faculty. For example, the "BESO program" within the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) refers to the Bilingual Education Student Organizations that operate as affiliates at various universities. These university-based chapters provide professional development, advocacy training, and support networks for future bilingual educators as they prepare for their careers in the field.

These steps align with both BMEA statutory requirements and Title VII historical best practices.

2. Integrating Title VII Framework for IHE Training (See Appendix A): A Blueprint for Strengthening Teacher Preparation

Title VII—the federal Bilingual Education Act—offers a comprehensive model for bilingual educator preparation that remains relevant. My evaluation emphasizes that New Mexico's IHEs must follow Title VII's principles to adequately prepare bilingual teachers, even though current state licensure mandates are shifting toward English-only structured literacy.

Below is the integration of Title VII components with your recommendations for how New Mexico IHEs should implement training for bilingual educators.

2.1. Funding for Training Programs

Title VII provided federal funding for competitive grants supporting bilingual education training programs.

Recommendation:

New Mexico must re-establish an equivalent state-level grant program that funds:

- Bilingual teacher residencies for K-12 classroom educators
- Bilingual Education cohort of graduate students to prepare for Institute of Higher Education
- Paid field experiences in bilingual classrooms
- Stipends for bilingual paraprofessionals completing programs
- Bilingual education grants for graduate students to pursue MA or PhD
- Summer institutes centered on biliteracy and heritage language development

IHEs should be prioritized to develop bilingual teacher pipelines, similar to Title VII-era collaborations between districts and universities.

2.2. In-service and Pre-service Training

Title VII mandated dual pathways supporting both working educators, future teachers and professors.

Recommendation:

IHEs should create dual credential routes enabling:

- Paraprofessionals (often bilingual) to earn their bilingual/TESOL degrees through evening/weekend programs
- SSBB graduates to enter accelerated bilingual teacher preparation programs
- Combination in-service and pre-service training that integrates field-based bilingual pedagogy

IHEs must restore bilingual coursework that includes Spanish, heritage language literacy development, and culturally sustained pedagogy.

2.3. Curriculum and Methodology Training

Title VII emphasized bilingual pedagogy—helping teachers use two languages effectively to support EIs in BME programs.

Recommendation:

IHE programs must include:

- Biliteracy coursework grounded in translanguaging, dynamic biliteracy, and Spanish literacy—not just English SoR
- Coursework on biliteracy practices such as interactive dialogue journals, mini-shared reading, name games, bilingual word study, and morphology across languages
- Methods classes co-taught by bilingual faculty, Native language instructors, and community-based language experts

Evaluation explicitly warns that NMPED’s monolingual SoR requirements *undermine bilingualism and violate the intent of BMEA*. Integrating research-based bilingual methods corrects this misalignment.

2.4. Professional Development

Title VII funded coordinated professional development across school staff.

Recommendation:

IHEs and NMPED must jointly develop professional development systems that include:

- BMEAC-approved biliteracy training modules (such as BOLD and Dynamic Biliteracy)
- Ongoing bi/multilingual pedagogy training for teachers, principals, instructional coaches, and literacy specialists
- Partnerships with DLeNM, tribal departments of education, and multicultural organizations

These efforts create bilingual school ecosystems not isolated bilingual teachers.

2.5. Fellowship Programs

Title VII created graduate-level bilingual education fellowships.

Recommendation:

New Mexico should recreate bilingual education fellowships through:

- Scholarships for MA-level bilingual education and TESOL students
- Funding for graduate-level research assistantships focused on bilingualism/biliteracy development and multicultural education
- Support for doctoral students researching bilingual education, heritage language revitalization, and bilingualism/biliteracy development and multicultural education

IHEs should recruit intentionally SSBB recipients, bilingual paraprofessionals, and Indigenous language learners into these fellowships to prepare the future IHE professors.

2.6. Focus on Culture

Title VII emphasized cultural knowledge as core to bilingual teaching.

Recommendation:

IHE programs must embed:

- Indigenous language, culture, and sovereignty content
- Mexican American, Chicano, Afro-Indigenous, and borderlands pedagogical frameworks
- Culturally sustaining teaching aligned with the histories of New Mexico's multilingual communities

Evaluation stresses that cultural grounding is inseparable from bilingualism and biliteracy—a component missing in NMPED's literacy-heavy licensure mandates.

Conclusion

The Martinez/Yazzie Action Plan recognizes some elements of bilingual education, yet its implementation strategies—particularly around literacy, licensure, and educator preparation do not comply with the BMEA's purpose or address the community's concerns. By failing to integrate bilingual pedagogy, biliteracy research, bilingual assessment practices, and culturally grounded training, NMPED risks perpetuating inequitable outcomes for English Learners.

However, by adopting recommendations rooted in Title VII structures and leveraging SSBB as a bilingual educator recruitment pipeline, New Mexico can build a robust, sustainable system that prepares highly qualified bilingual educators, strengthens biliteracy pathways, and fulfills the promise of the Martinez/Yazzie ruling.

References

- Ascenzi-Moreno, L. (2018). Formative assessment as an equity tool for emergent bilinguals. *The Reading Teacher*, 72(2), 251–260.
- Coady, M., Harper, C., & de Jong, E. (2016). Aiming for equity: Preparing mainstream teachers for inclusion or inclusive classrooms? *TESOL Quarterly*, 50(2), 340–368.
- Durán, L., Gorman, B., Kohlmeier, T., & Callard, C. (2016). Developing language and literacy materials for dual language programs: Lessons from the Círculos de Lectura project. In *Bilingual Education and America's Future: Evidence and Pathways* (pp. 32–33). Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, UCLA.
- Durán, L., Roseth, C., & Hoffman, P. (2013). Impact of dual language education on the home language literacy of Spanish-speaking children. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 36(1), 41–57.
- Escamilla, K., & Hopewell, S. (2010). *Biliteracy development in two-way immersion: Biliteracy from the start*. Boulder, CO: University of Colorado.
- Escamilla, K., Hopewell, S., Butvilofsky, S., Sparrow, W., Soltero-González, L., Ruiz-Figueroa, O., & Escamilla, M. (2016). *Biliteracy from the Start: Literacy Squared in Action*. Philadelphia: Caslon.
- García, O., Johnson, S. I., & Seltzer, K. (2017). *The Translanguaging Classroom: Leveraging Student Bilingualism for Learning*. Philadelphia: Caslon.
- Jimenez-Silva, M., Ruiz, E., & Smith, R. (2021). Pathways to bilingual teaching: Supporting bilingual paraprofessionals and community members to enter the profession. In *Bilingual Education and America's Future: Evidence and Pathways*. Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, UCLA.
- McClain, J., Oh, S., & Mancilla-Martinez, J. (2021). Beyond the monolingual lens: Assessing bilingual students' language development. In *Bilingual Education and America's Future: Evidence and Pathways* (p. 33). Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, UCLA.
- Murphy, A. (2014). Home language literacy development in dual language programs. In *Bilingual Education and America's Future: Evidence and Pathways* (p. 22). Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, UCLA.
- Nieto, S. (2017). Re-imagining multicultural education: New visions, new possibilities. *Multicultural Education Review*, 9(1), 1–10.
- Orfield, G., & Gándara, P. (2025). [Policy recommendations on bilingual educator pipelines].
- Rodríguez, J. L. (2014). *Designing culturally responsive biliteracy curriculum materials*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Steele, J. L., Slater, R. O., Zamarro, G., Miller, T., Li, J., Burkhauser, S., & Bacon, M. (2017). Effects of dual-language immersion programs on student achievement: Evidence from lottery data. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1), 282–306.

Torres-Guzmán, M. (2002). Dual language programs: Key features and results. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 26(1), 1–26.

Umansky, I., & Dumont, H. (2021). Teachers' perceptions of English learner students: The role of bilingual settings. In *Bilingual Education and America's Future: Evidence and Pathways* (p. 14). Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, UCLA.

WIDA. (2024). *WIDA Can Do Philosophy*. Madison, WI: Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System.

Appendix A Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), or the Bilingual Education Act, supported the training of teachers through various grant initiatives to ensure qualified personnel were available for bilingual programs.

Keyways Title VII supported teacher training:

- **Funding for Training Programs:** The Act provided federal funds, distributed as competitive grants to local school districts and institutions of higher education, to establish and operate training programs for educational personnel.
- **In-service and Pre-service Training:** Grants were used for both in-service training of existing teachers and aides, and for pre-service training to prepare new teachers for positions in bilingual education.
- **Curriculum and Methodology Training:** The training helped teachers acquire the appropriate methodologies to facilitate English learners' acquisition of English and academic development. This included preparing teachers to use research-based practices and learning strategies and effectively use curricula and materials in two languages (English and the students' native language).
- **Professional Development:** The funds supported professional development activities for a range of school staff, including teachers, aides, principals, and bilingual program directors, ensuring a coordinated and effective school-wide approach.
- **Fellowship Programs:** Later amendments, such as those in 1988, established specific fellowship programs to support professional training at the graduate level, addressing the need for highly specialized personnel.
- **Focus on Culture:** The training programs often emphasized the history and cultures associated with the students' home or heritage language, a critical component of a comprehensive bilingual education approach.

This support aimed to address the persistent shortage of qualified bilingual teachers and ensure that students with limited English proficiency received an equitable and effective education.