



# ENGAGING FAMILIES WITH MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS LEARNING ENGLISH

ENGLISH LEARNER OUTCOMES PROGRAM – COHORT 3

**OREGON'S KITCHEN TABLE**

December 2025



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# INTRODUCTION

Beginning in spring 2025, Oregon’s Kitchen Table (OKT) partnered with the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and 12 school districts in different parts of Oregon that are participating in the state’s English Learner Outcomes Program (ELOP)<sup>1</sup>. OKT worked with districts for nearly a year to host a range of community engagement activities tailored to meet a range of needs and opportunities in each district’s communities. OKT staff hosted community conversations, attended school-based events, and spoke with families in a variety of settings about what they think might best to support them and their students. Approximately 650 families and students shared their experiences related to English language learning, ideas for what could support students’ learning, and hopes for the future.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout this process, we heard from many caregivers, students, and district and school staff who value the connections and relationships they have with one another in their school communities. We also heard a strong desire to deepen these connections, particularly through ongoing engagement activities dedicated to families with multilingual students learning English. In many of our conversations with caregivers, we heard about the key role that bilingual district staff, school staff or community partners play in connecting families to each other, providing information, serving as an avenue for sharing concerns or questions, and acting as a “point person” for a host of school-related navigation. In districts where such a point person or people exist, families expressed great appreciation for those individuals. Relatedly, families also desire more clear, consistent, and bilingual communications about school events and activities, student progress, and other key pieces of information.

Families are eager to support their students’ learning at home and look to districts to provide more bilingual resources about homework, schoolwork or opportunities for the whole family to engage in learning, whether that’s English

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<sup>1</sup> Through ELOP, ODE identifies districts in need of support and partners with them for a four-year period to improve outcomes for students designated as English learners.

language learning for both adults and students or hands-on activities focused on topics like math. In many districts, we heard a high degree of uncertainty about whether, how, and why their students are (or are not) receiving English Language Development (ELD) services and a desire to better understand what those services look like throughout the school day.

In each of the districts we worked with over the past several months, our district and school partners were eager to support families and passionate about creating ways for them to share what they think. District staff welcomed the OKT team warmly to their existing school-based activities and celebrations and spent hours with us planning and hosting community conversations dedicated to hearing from their English Language Learner (ELL) families. They worried over whether their families would feel safe and comfortable attending gatherings in a time when many families do not feel safe venturing into public spaces. In many instances, families told us that their children's schools are the only community-based spaces they felt comfortable attending a gathering. While families did share challenges and negative experiences they or their students may have had, more often than not, we heard about how much they appreciate their children's teachers. When we gathered with families, we saw students hug their teachers and heard teachers tell parents how much they enjoyed having their children in their classes and what important members of their school community they are.

Above all else, families - and educators - want to continue to strengthen connections and relationships with their school communities, pointing to the importance of continuing to dedicate time and resources to supporting family engagement through both regular, short outreach and engagement activities as well as larger opportunities to celebrate together or spaces to provide input on important district and school decisions.

We recognize that reaching families often takes individual outreach in families' home languages and multiple touchpoints. For many smaller districts with less capacity and for larger districts with hundreds of families, this can feel overwhelming. For families, however, these personal touchpoints are at the heart of feeling connected

with their child's education. At one school event - the second time OKT hosted conversations with ELL families in a district with very few bilingual resources or staff - a mother told us, "por favor, no se olviden de nosotros." (Translation: "Please don't forget about us.")

We encourage our district partners to do just that: keep up the effort to engage them, even if it takes multiple attempts, time or trying new approaches. We look forward to continuing to partner with districts and "staying with" families to make sure their voices are heard in future OKT projects on a variety of important public decisions.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 2015, the Oregon State Legislature passed House Bill 3499 to improve outcomes for English Language Learner (ELL) students. The bill directed the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to develop and implement a statewide education plan for ELL students in the K-12 education system. The bill also allocated funds for activities to improve educational outcomes for ELL and emergent bilingual students. Over the past several years ODE identified and assisted two cohorts of school districts in their efforts to meet the bill's objectives and the needs of ELL students.

In 2025, ODE began to work with a third cohort of 12 school districts through ODE's English Learner Outcomes Program (ELOP). ODE partnered with Oregon's Kitchen Table (OKT) to support districts in conducting engagement with their school communities. OKT worked with all 12 districts from spring 2025 through December 2025 to plan, design, and carry out a set of different engagement activities, tailored to meet a range of needs and opportunities in each district's communities. The 12 districts in ELOP's 3rd cohort are distinct in terms of their size, location, surrounding community, and capacity to engage families.

OKT's approach to community engagement draws upon Targeted Universalism<sup>3</sup> as a framework, and we applied this framework to how we approached our support for districts. We set a universal goal for all districts: to hear from families with multilingual students who are learning English and students themselves about what would support families and students in their learning. We then worked with each district to craft a plan and timeline for engagement from April through December 2025, as well as outreach strategies and specific questions for engagement.

## WHO WE HEARD FROM

Between April and December 2025 and across all districts, OKT staff heard from approximately 650 caregivers and students who either are currently receiving or previously received services through districts' English Language Development (ELD) programs.<sup>4</sup> At school-based events where OKT hosted "conversation tables", we also spoke with other families whose students - some multilingual and some who are not - are not receiving ELD services. Input from these families provided those districts with a sense of the experiences and perspectives across different groups of students and where the experiences and perspectives of their families and students receiving ELD services may differ from families and students who do not receive ELD services.

The preferred language for the vast majority of multilingual students receiving ELD services in the 12 ELOP Cohort 3 districts is Spanish and thus most of the families we spoke with are Spanish speaking. A smaller number speak Arabic, English, Filipino, Russian, Somali, and Vietnamese, and much smaller numbers (often in just a few families in each district) speak another language not listed above. While educators

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<sup>3</sup> Targeted universalism (TU) is a framework for policy development and implementation first developed by Berkeley professor and Othering and Belonging Institute (OBI) Director John A. Powell. As described by OBI, "TU encourages belonging-builders to identify universal goals for all while recognizing the need for tailored approaches to help different groups reach those goals."

<https://belonging.berkeley.edu/targeted-universalism>

<sup>4</sup> This summary focuses on the approximately 650 people – including caregivers and students themselves - we heard from across all 12 districts who indicated that their family or they themselves as a student has had some experience related to their district's ELD program.

were not the primary focus of the community engagement efforts in this project, we also heard from district leaders, administrators, and teachers about their experiences, perspectives, and hopes for their families and students. District staff provided valuable input on family engagement with their school communities in general as well as the challenges and opportunities that districts and schools face in developing and beginning to implement their ELOP plans. We include this input here, too, in the hopes that it will be helpful as ODE and other decision makers in the future think about ways to continue to support districts and community engagement through ELOP.

## **WHAT WE ASKED PEOPLE ABOUT**

We worked with each district to identify particular focus areas and questions that would help inform decisions about their ELOP plan or support the evolution of their plan over time. This process included building from districts' existing knowledge, such as findings from root cause analyses, prior engagement, and ongoing improvement efforts, to help surface questions or areas where additional insight or support would be most useful. While districts had some specific questions relevant to their own school communities, there were several areas of inquiry that districts had in common. These include questions about:

- What families and students most value about their school communities;
- What could help increase more regular attendance;
- What academic or learning support or resources families think could be most helpful to support children's learning at school and at home;
- What would help families to connect with other families with multilingual learners and / or their school community as a whole;
- How people want to be engaged, either on an ongoing basis or when there are important decisions the district seeks input about; and
- What people prefer regarding school and district communications

At the end of each community engagement interview or community conversation we invited participants to share a hope that they have for their children - or for themselves, if students - in their learning.

## **TIMING CONSIDERATIONS FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

The engagement related to this project demonstrated the importance of timing for both districts and families. Staff from over half of the districts we supported talked about the challenges of fitting in meaningful family engagement within the timeline ELOP set alongside conducting both a Comprehensive Needs Assessment and Root Cause Analysis prior to receiving funding. And all of this took place during the final two months of the school year when staff have limited capacity, calendars are already set, and families' attention is focused elsewhere. About a third of the districts identified opportunities to co-host engagement activities with OKT in spring 2025, inviting OKT to join already scheduled district or school events and conduct small group or individual conversations. One district worked with OKT and a community partner to host a community conversation dedicated to hearing from families whose students received ELD services.

The summer months also proved challenging as several districts' staff were off contract and there was little - if any - communication with families during that time. With some districts, August did offer opportunities to combine "welcome to the school year" activities and events with OKT conversations. OKT joined two districts for such events and worked with a third to host a conversation in Spanish with families whose students received ELD services. We noticed that when districts and OKT staff put concentrated effort into inviting families through multiple means and in multiple languages, families participated. In one district, half of all families with ELL students participated during an August family conversation ahead of the school year.

Connecting an opportunity for family input during existing "end of year" celebrations or "return to school welcomes" offered opportunities for families to gather

in a joyful setting or to look ahead to the coming year. We also heard in several conversations that families themselves want opportunities to celebrate their students and their achievements and to enjoy cultural activities with each other. In some of these settings, OKT staff offered food and asked families just one question. We followed up with more in-depth questions in the fall in these districts, but these initial engagement activities - while simple and concise - provided an initial sense of what is on families' minds and helped in designing those further conversations.

## **WHAT WE HEARD ABOUT COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN FAMILIES AND DISTRICTS**

Almost every district we worked with was interested in hearing from families about improving communications with families and what could help families feel more connected with their school community. Our conversations covered a range of topics related to both communication and connections, but several shared perspectives, experiences, and desires related to both emerged across many districts.

### **Both families and districts want districtwide community events to be more inviting for families with multilingual students.**

We often heard that families are interested in attending school or district events, but they need more resources and support from bilingual staff who are familiar to be able to do so. They also would welcome community-wide events that include their culture and languages. Families often suggested having community-wide events where food from their cultures is represented as well as different activities, such as dance or music. And, several families mentioned that they didn't want to feel like they were different or separate from other families at school or district-wide events. Families also shared that they have limited time for events, particularly given work schedules and obligations.

Some of the districts we worked named wanting to be as inclusive as possible. As one district administrator put it, “we want to make sure our families feel welcome and invited at all our events.” Several staff described feeling like they don’t have the resources or staffing to be able to support families at school or district events, particularly on an ongoing basis.

Families shared that participation in school-based family organizations such as Parent Teacher Associations is often difficult due to scheduling constraints and language barriers. In some districts, families shared that the school used to support family groups or events for Spanish speaking families, but these opportunities no longer exist. As one participant said, “I would like to see an affinity group in the school. Something like a Latin group.” Similarly, in some districts, Spanish-speaking families have a strong desire to volunteer at school events or on field trips, but there is confusion about when and how to get involved.

### **Families value and want to see more bilingual staff who are trusted points of contact to support families in navigating the school system in their own languages.**

Throughout our conversations, families often pointed to the importance of, or need for, district staff who are bilingual and trusted “points of contact” for families with multilingual students. In districts where such staff is in place, families would often name specific individuals. In some communities, district staff may not serve in such a role, but there is someone who does through a community partner, such as a Migrant Education Program family coordinator or a local cultural group. A couple of the districts in the ELOP cohort do not currently have bilingual staff to serve formally in such a role; however, families shared that some teachers - often the district’s EL teacher - are helpful resources. Still, without a consistent staff person who speaks families’ home languages, families don’t know who to turn to with questions, concerns, or to seek help in better understanding school communications. One person summed this up,

saying, “No había una persona designada para ayudar o dar seguimiento.” (English translation: “There wasn’t a designated person to help or to follow up.”)

We heard an appreciation for times when districts provide interpreters, such as during parent-teacher conferences. Many families said these are often available on a case-by-case basis or at specific events like parent-teacher conferences, which limits opportunities to be able to connect with their school community. We also heard a strong desire for in-person interpretation vs. Zoom interpretation.

In at least one district, we heard from families, district staff, and community members that very few resources exist both within the district as well as in the wider community to support Spanish speaking families and multilingual learners. Over the course of our partnership, we worked with the district to identify potential community partners in the county where the district is located while ODE identified partners through Educational Service Districts who might be able to support interpretation and translation. While this was just one district among the 12 districts in ELOP cohort 3, the district and families are likely not alone in their experiences and challenges in Oregon.

### **Families and districts and schools all emphasize the importance of feeling connected, and families want to feel valued and respected in their school communities.**

Several of the ELOP districts in this process were interested in learning from families about what could help increase a feeling of belonging for families with multilingual students learning English. At base, families emphasized feeling listened to and respected. One student shared, ““People [in my school community] are kind and inclusive.” We also heard that a significant factor of feeling welcomed and valued is when there’s Spanish-speaking staff at the front office, in classrooms, and during events. Other families referred to the relationships they have with district staff and teachers as described above. Students themselves shared similar sentiments, adding that friendships with peers was also one of the most significant aspects of school for them.

At the same time, we also heard from many families about feeling excluded or “different” from the broader school community. In settings with smaller numbers of multilingual students, we often heard stories of isolation or feeling disconnected. Several families shared during our conversations, “I thought my student was the only one” receiving ELD services “until tonight’s conversation.”

In several districts, families raised concerns about bullying in general and also specific to their students’ proficiency in English. We noticed concerns about bullying came up more often in districts with smaller numbers of multilingual students learning English. Families in several districts also raised concerns about whether their child’s school was safe in general, particularly from potential intruders or gun violence. A few families shared that, in response, they had enrolled their child in one of the virtual public charters in the ELOP cohort, noting that virtual learning provided a safer environment at home and reduced their child’s exposure to bullying.

**There is a strong preference for more clear and consistent communication in families’ home languages and in multilingual formats.**

Many districts had recently begun to use new communication apps (most commonly, ParentSquare or ParentVue) to share information with families, provide updates about student progress, and provide ways for families and teachers to communicate. We heard a mix of experiences from families about communication methods, with some parents finding ParentVue or ParentSquare easy to use while others do not. And many families shared that having multiple communication apps is a challenge to navigate, with information and messages getting lost.

Many families shared that many school communications are not translated and there aren’t resources available in their language to be able to understand school assignments or navigate the online tools and apps that all districts use, both in-person and virtual. We also heard a strong preference for phone calls in Spanish for important

communications (especially if something is related to their children in particular) followed by texts.

In our outreach work with districts to invite families to district events or OKT-hosted gatherings, we observed the following communication strategies were particularly effective in reaching families and led to family participation:

1. Direct phone calls to families in families' home language.
2. Text messages were less effective than phone calls but still effective overall.
3. Clearly letting families know what to expect at events or gatherings is also important to help families feel welcome and valued. This includes details about food, student participation or activities, topics for conversation, and other kinds of support for participants.

### **The current political climate is increasingly impacting families' and school communities' comfort with gathering in public settings.**

Many community members, partners, and families shared a high level of concern about attending events at open or public venues. We also heard increased caution around responding to invitations from unknown phone numbers to gather. Some of the fall engagement activities occurred at a time when a surge of immigration enforcement sightings began in particular parts of the state. In one district, while several families whose students are multilingual learners in the district's ELD program had planned and registered to attend family gatherings, attendance was significantly lower than anticipated.

Some districts noted a dip in fall enrollment amongst their ELL students while one virtual public charter saw an increase from October through December. We want to acknowledge how deeply these external factors influence community engagement, particularly in engaging families who may be immigrants or refugees or whose home language is a language other than English. And we continue to hear from more district

partners that they are turning to different approaches to family engagement, such as home visits instead of community gatherings, for example.

## **WHAT WE HEARD ABOUT ACADEMIC SUPPORT AND RESOURCES**

All ELOP districts and schools were interested in hearing from families and students about what they wanted to see to better support students' learning. We heard a range of ideas, but several emerged as common themes across the 12 districts.

### **There is widespread confusion and uncertainty about how ELD programs and services work.**

In some districts, we asked families specifically about their and their student's experiences receiving services through the district's ELD program. In other districts, this topic came up in the course of our conversations. In almost every conversation, we heard a high degree of confusion and uncertainty about those services. Overall, we heard a general desire for more information at different points in a student's English language development path, from identification of eligibility for services to student progress and more clear explanations about what test results mean or demonstrate through how students may "exit" the ELD program. Even when information is provided, families often share the view that it is too technical or too long and thus confusing and unclear. We noticed that confusion increased among families in our conversations whose students are part of dual language programs or whose students also receive special education services.

Several families shared that they thought their child had been misidentified in some way as either needing or not needing ELD services. Some parents noted their child, who is fluent in English and raised in a bilingual household, is continually

identified as needing services. One parent said, “I really hope the school doesn't see him differently just because he is Latin. The staff wants to put him in ESL classes right away. Even when he doesn't need those classes.” Conversely, other families felt their child was not receiving necessary ELD services. District staff expressed frustration with trying to pinpoint where in the system these identification issues occur. One virtual public charter school noted that involving a third-party 'parent company' for enrollment paperwork might lead to missing students who could benefit from ELD services. Another district staff member shared that despite prior efforts to address identification challenges, families continue to report their children have been misidentified.

Families also want to learn more about what ELD services look like throughout the student's school day. We heard some concern that students may be “othered” or treated differently if they are pulled out of classes. Some students said they missed electives that they enjoy in order to be present for ELD services. As one student shared, “I have to leave my art class to go that class and learn English.” In one conversation, parents voiced concerns that their students may be missing instruction in “core” subjects like math, reading, or writing, causing them to fall behind in those areas. We also heard - from families, students, and teachers - that older students in particular may achieve a level of English proficiency that supports their learning in other subjects, gain employment, or be able to easily converse in English; however, students still struggle to pass the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA). One staff person wondered if the ELPA Oregon uses is the appropriate assessment tool and noted that many other states use a different type of assessment. Overall, families want regular progress reports about how their children are doing.

For some families whose students attend a language immersion program, we noticed additional confusion about what those programs provide regarding English language development and what ELD services might provide. Some parents shared concerns that their student may not be receiving adequate English language instruction, particularly in younger grades. We also heard concerns - from both families and district staff - about whether the goals of immersion programs are in

conflict with expectations and statewide assessments for younger students, particularly in elementary school when immersion students first begin to read in Spanish.

### **Families think that celebrating multilingualism and language learning for the whole family would help to support student learning and increase a sense of belonging.**

Several of the ideas that families shared that they thought could help increase feeling welcome, safe, valued, and connected in their school community relate to a desire for incorporating families' languages and cultures. This includes suggestions for hosting more school-wide cultural events or activities, more bilingual staff, and most commonly, consistent bilingual and / or Spanish information. Many families also shared their view that being multilingual is an asset, and they'd like to see their district or school do more to celebrate and support their students' multilingual skills.

Many families expressed interest in English learning opportunities offered through their schools for the whole family, including for adults to learn and practice English. In a few conversations, parents shared that they weren't sure where in the community they could go to learn English. Families said they want to learn English in order to be able to support their children's learning and to be able to communicate with teachers and staff directly without relying on interpreters or bilingual staff for communication.

### **Increasing attendance is a shared priority, but there is a wide range of support needed.**

Increasing more regular attendance is a current priority for almost every district. Many of our district partners are prioritizing increasing more regular attendance for their entire district. Some districts noted that they do see disparities in attendance for their multilingual students learning English versus the student body as a whole. In other districts, however, multilingual students learning English have

similar and sometimes more regular attendance compared to the whole student body. Because regular attendance is a high priority, districts wanted to make sure to include the voices of their families with multilingual learners. In some districts, we gathered input from any family who wanted to talk with us, which helped provide districts with a sense of the factors that impact families with multilingual learners in particular. We frequently heard that transportation challenges and bussing issues (late buses or changes to bus routes or schedules, for example) impact regular attendance.

Caregiver work schedules also play a role in regular attendance, particularly for those families where caregivers work either a late-night shift or whose work shifts start in the morning before schools open. In one district, for example, we heard that “parents have to be there [at work] at the same time that they have to drop their kids off. So being able to drop them around 6:45 am would be very helpful.” In some districts, families also described how winter weather conditions create additional barriers to attendance, especially when bus routes do not serve certain areas, leaving caregivers to navigate unsafe or difficult travel conditions on their own.

In one district where regular attendance is a high priority, OKT joined the district and community partners to share input we gathered from families with multilingual students learning English. Community partners reviewed district data and patterns and discussed what families had also raised and the possibilities for a range of supports, including meeting before school care needs, efforts to build in links to experiential learning and career-related opportunities, and outreach about the importance of school attendance, including kindergarten as families shared there is a perception that kindergarten attendance isn’t important.

### **Families and students view math as an area where they want more support and resources.**

Math often came up as an area that many families and students across districts notice challenges and want more support. We noticed that families with younger students and students in elementary school who participated often shared that math is

one of their favorite subjects; however, by middle school and high school, many families and students felt the opposite. In a couple of districts, we also heard that caregivers want support for themselves to help their students with math at home as instruction looks very different from math approaches and instruction parents had when they were in school. In response, several districts have identified math as a focus area for their ELOP plan.

**Families and students both see value in linking classroom learning to real world applications and want to see more experiential learning and connections to post-secondary learning and career pathways.**

Many families and students we talked with mentioned valuing the ways that their language learning was valuable beyond school and expressed wanting more “hands on” instruction in the classroom and experiential learning both inside and outside the classroom. Several caregivers pointed to the need to better connect “what are the most important subjects or classes that they need to take in high school that will help them to have a better path for college.”

Many parents and students themselves suggested that schools increase more engaging, experiential lessons in classrooms to motivate students’ attendance. We also heard that more opportunities for extracurricular activities and electives are important factors. As one student said about their extracurricular activities and attendance, “they hold me accountable” to attend school and classes.

When we asked students - from kindergarten through 10th grade - about what they valued most about gaining proficiency in another language, many students pointed to how their bilingual skills would help them gain employment or attend college after high school. Other students talked about wanting to be able to easily communicate with family members, friends, or people in other countries as a high value in their language acquisition.

## **EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES UNIQUE TO VIRTUAL LEARNING SETTINGS**

In three of the districts in ELOP cohort 3, virtual public schools chartered through those districts serve most - and in some cases all - of the multilingual students receiving ELD services. Students attending virtual charter schools are scattered across the state, though many of those schools' students receiving ELD services reside in the Portland metro or Salem area. Still, their geographic distribution and lack of "brick and mortar" gathering spaces offered some particular challenges in engaging families. We did hear many of the same perspectives that families in in-person learning settings shared, particularly the deep appreciation for staff and teachers. Multiple families from one virtual school talked about how responsive teachers were. In conversations with families from the other two virtual schools, families pointed to specific administrators or teachers who were particularly helpful and supportive. Families often shared that they value the flexibility online learning offers to both students and families. We also heard that students who faced bullying in in-person settings found virtual classes and interactions beneficial.

Families from virtual schools who we spoke with noted that while some digital tools are easy to use, the online platforms and digital tools that virtual schools rely on can create barriers for families in supporting their students' learning. Families shared that ParentSquare, Canvas, online calendars, and Zoom links present the most challenges for them. One parent said their student hadn't been able to join any of their weekly class meetings on Zoom because the Zoom link provided never worked for them.

Even when information is technically "available" or schools offer interpretation, parents struggle with finding where information is or accessing the information and interpretation. One parent described trying to set up a profile for their student at the start of the school year and spending hours trying to navigate the system, including trying to access help through both an IT support helpline and chat bot. Caregivers often said they have to turn to students themselves, individual teachers, or other family

members to navigate their school's virtual platforms. We heard that this leads to caregivers feeling disconnected from their students' learning and increases confusion and a lack of understanding about school work and expectations. In addition, parents pointed to a lack of multilingual resources or user guides.

We also heard from both families and school staff that virtual public charters often experience fluctuating enrollment throughout the year. As we worked with the virtual public charters, uncertainty about enrollment or enrollment changes from one year to the next or even within a school term meant that long-term planning for engagement was challenging. At one school, approximately 15 students receiving ELD services enrolled in the week or two before we were hosting a virtual Zoom gathering. We also noticed that while Spanish continued to be the primary language amongst families with students receiving ELD services, there were more students whose families preferred a language other than Spanish.

While virtual schools do offer several opportunities and organized activities for families to meet and gather in-person, they are more limited in numbers throughout the year and - as there is not a "brick and mortar" school setting - are often held in public spaces such as parks. Additionally, students enrolled in virtual public charter schools may live in many different communities across Oregon, which also makes providing opportunities for in-person opportunities for connecting and engaging families more challenging. At the same time, many families want to see more opportunities for in-person interaction, either through school-wide events or smaller, geographical events and field trips in their area.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO ODE BASED ON WHAT WE HEARD**

In our work with ELOP Cohort 3 districts, we provided each district with a set of recommendations based on what we heard from families and students. These were tailored to highlight what is important to those families in each particular district and to meet each district's engagement goals and inform each district's ELOP plan. We offer

this set of recommendations below for ODE to consider both in its work supporting districts in this ELOP cohort over the next few years as well as future ELOP cohorts.

Our recommendations focus on community engagement support in particular but a few do reflect activities that ODE could consider taking in response to what we heard from both families as well as district staff themselves. And some of these recommendations are for ODE and ELOP Cohort districts to consider in partnership as they work together to support families with multilingual students learning English.

- **Consider ways to support districts with multilingual staff who can serve as trusted people for families to turn to for support in their own language.** This may take different forms, depending on resources, capacity, or connections with other entities in the community, including Educational Service Districts.
- **Consider drawing upon the framework of Targeted Universalism for how ELOP approaches supporting districts with family engagement as we have done in this process.** ODE could build in flexibility in both *when* engagement occurs (timing) and *what* the engagement goals and activities are for each district. For instance, in some districts, conducting family engagement ahead of providing their ELOP plan may be helpful and feasible. For others, conducting family engagement a year into ELOP to evaluate and make adjustments to the district's ELOP plan may offer an opportunity for the most meaningful engagement.
- **Continue to provide support to districts to expand their capacity to meaningfully engage families with multilingual students learning English.** Support for engagement may differ depending on districts' unique needs, capacities, and other contexts. Several districts shared that they value having someone external host engagement activities to help families feel comfortable providing honest input. Other districts may need help in being able to provide important key elements – such as food - that contribute to creating a warm, welcome environment for family engagement.
- **Using lessons learned and examples from past ELOP cohorts, offer future ELOP cohorts with practices and approaches that have been effective to engage families during the ELOP process.**

Based on our work with Cohort 3 districts, these might include:

- Weave engagement related to ELOP in with other current engagement efforts related to district priorities.
  - Amplify outreach efforts in families' home languages for existing district or school events, particularly those that are joyful or celebrate families' cultures and languages.
  - Partner with caregivers and other trusted community connectors – such as Migrant Education Program staff in some places - who act as leaders in informal and formal ways to be part of designing and inviting families to gatherings and events.
- **Support districts in efforts to engage with families about English Language Development programs and services in clear, plain language and in multilingual formats.** While districts and ODE already provide a range of information and resources about ELD services and programs, many families seek clearer and more simple explanations in multiple languages. ODE and districts might also consider partnering to conduct further engagement with families across the state in order to ensure that materials and interactions meet families' needs, questions, and concerns.
  - **Consider ways to support districts in particular academic areas or approaches families and students have identified as priorities.** Because many families and students identified many of the same academic topics or approaches, ODE could focus on offering support to districts for multilingual students learning English in math instruction or experiential learning.

## CONCLUSION

This engagement process was intended to provide the 12 ELOP Cohort 3 districts with a sense of what their families and students want in order to improve students' experiences in school and their academic journeys. While our work with ODE and these districts on this particular engagement process has ended, we encourage our district partners to continue to gather with their families - whether that's through phone calls, texts, home visits, or as a community - and share how their input is shaping decisions.

Families and students themselves are also important community connectors, with several caregivers stepping forward in some of the districts we worked with to co-design engagement, conduct outreach, and facilitate conversations themselves. We encourage districts to pay careful attention to nurturing those relationships and exploring ways to support families and students in this role. And as some of the priorities and actions families have identified as important to them may entail support and resources from community partners, we encourage district and school staff to look to the broader community that surrounds their schools. Finally, as ODE continues to support ELOP Cohort 3 districts and future districts through the program, we hope the reflections offered in this summary provide opportunities to continue to support districts in their efforts to engage families, students, and their community.

We are deeply grateful for the many opportunities to sit down with families over a meal, to paint with students and hear about their favorite subjects or activities while their parents talked with each other, and to work alongside district and school partners who welcomed us so warmly into their school communities. It has been a gift to hear family and student stories and hopes over the past several months, and we look forward to working alongside districts, schools, families, and students to ensure their voices continue to be heard on a range of important decisions in Oregon.