

Bilingual Special Education Certification Advocacy Guide



Strong policies for multilingual students with disabilities require advocates, families, educators and policymakers working together at every level. This guide offers concrete tools to drive change by the state legislature.

Change State-Level Legislation

- **See what current law says.** Look up what your state requires for special education and bilingual education certifications.
- **Build a coalition.** Bring together families, educators and community members. Key groups: teacher associations and unions, disability rights organizations, bilingual education advocates, civil rights groups, and college faculty (such as at minority-serving institutions).
- **Meet with legislators.** Talk with your state-level representative and senators' offices. Share your story and show them IDRA's model policy. Ask them to introduce or sponsor this legislation. See IDRA's infographic: How to Meet with Your Elected Official: <https://idra.news/HowtoMeetwithYourElectedOfficial>



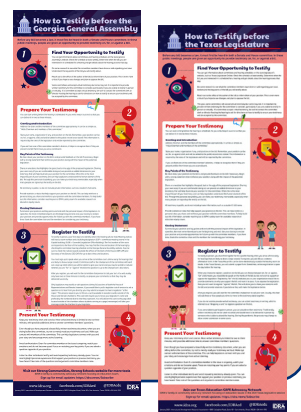
If you can, bring together several people from your community for your meeting with the legislator(s). If your legislator(s) are interested in proceeding, they can outline for you some strategies for success, including key timelines and probable legislative partners.

- **Testify.** Once a bill is introduced and a hearing is scheduled, submit testimony. Include data and stories about the problem in your school district.



Testify: Include data about the problem in your school district to show that yours is not an isolated incident. Find out the procedures for signing up to testify and rules about testimony length. See our **bilingual infographics for Georgia and Texas as examples.**

- Georgia: <https://idra.news/HowToTestifyGa>
- Texas: <https://idra.news/HowToTestify>



Engage Partners

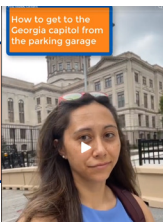
Implementing this policy will be smoother with broad support. Engage stakeholders early, such as the following groups.

- **Educators and teacher associations and unions:** Engage teacher unions in your area or state to discuss certification requirements or incentives and include bilingual special education certification in collective bargaining protections.
- **Families of multilingual students with disabilities:** Invite families to serve on advisory committees or testify. Hold listening sessions in English and other community languages.
- **School and district administrators:** Share information on the importance of bilingual special education-certified teachers. Work with school district leaders who will ultimately hire and support these educators.
- **College partners:** Partner with teacher preparation programs, especially those at minority-serving institutions, to develop aligned coursework and field placements.
- **Advocacy organizations:** Connect with coalitions with disability rights organizations, bilingual education advocates and civil rights groups.



Review the **Student Advocacy Guide** put together by Children's Defense Fund – Texas to learn how to tell your and your community's story in support of change.

<https://cdf.texas.org/policy/policy-priorities/education/student-advocacy-guide>



Watch IDRA's TikTok and Instagram accounts for videos with tons of advocacy tips: <https://idra.news/Social> (Also available on our SEEN website: <https://idraseen.org>)



See IDRA's 10 Tips for Speaking with Reporters

In the advocacy space, there are many opportunities to chat with the local, state and national media about your movement, topic or subject area you know about. Having news articles, television interviews, and other media opportunities is a great way to broadcast your message and broaden your scope of interested people.

<https://idra.news/ReporterTipsInfographic>



See IDRA's Infographic: How to Get Media Coverage for Advocacy

Media coverage is an integral part of advocacy work. Since most of us are not journalists, pitching to the media and knowing what to say to reporters may feel challenging. Here you can see some tips to get a journalist's attention and reach a wider audience.

<https://idra.news/MediaAdvocacyInfographic>





Talking Points

As you speak about this issue and encourage leaders to adopt new policy, below are some talking points you can use while also sharing your own story.

- Every child deserves a teacher who is trained to meet both their language and learning needs. Too often, multilingual students with disabilities are taught by teachers who are trained in only one or neither.
- Families should not have to choose between language support and special education for their children. Schools must be equipped to provide both through properly trained, bilingual special education-certified educators.
- Multilingual students with disabilities are more likely to be misidentified, placed in overly restrictive settings and denied key services they need. This is a matter of educational justice.
- Supporting emergent bilingual special education students helps create a stronger workforce: we are building a pipeline, not just a mandate with scholarships, residencies and rural flexibility built in.
- Teacher certification alone is not enough. States must fund training, track data on this population, and ensure every district – especially those with high need – has a staffing plan for bilingual special education-certified teachers and bilingual ancillary professionals.
- States that act now will improve services for current students and build a model of inclusive excellence that leads the nation forward. When we support these students, we celebrate their home language and believe their bilingualism is their superpower.
- Dual language education should not be an opportunity available only to students without disabilities. Multilingual students with disabilities deserve opportunities to become bilingual and biliterate while receiving the individualized services and supports they need to succeed. A disability should never erase a student's right to language. Multilingualism is an asset, and our schools must recognize and build upon that strength.

IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

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